

A
0
0
0
1
2
8
2
2
8
4



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

Stack
Annex
5
072
491

ifornia
onal
ity







Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

TEACHING AND HEALING.
AND
FINAL PERSEVERANCE NOT INEVITABLE.

Two Sermons

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS, AUGUST 7TH AND 14TH, 1881,

BY THE

REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

(Canon of St. Paul's.)

"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."—Matt. ix. 35.

THERE can be no need for insisting on the importance of an occasion such as the present. No profession touches the outward conditions of human life more constantly, more intimately, than the profession of medicine; and when its foremost European representatives are assembled under distinguished auspices in this metropolis to examine what their science has hitherto done towards relieving human suffering,—to decide, what, with its present attainments and resources, it may yet hope to do, we all are interested as a matter of course. Heirs as we are, all of us, to the legacy of disease and pain which comes down to us from the first father of our race, we welcome this serious and beneficent effort to review and marshal the accumulated stores of knowledge by which a kindly providence enables man, not indeed to escape his inevitable doom, but to alleviate, to reduce in area, to keep at bay, the physical sufferings which in the great majority of cases herald its approach. This great international meeting where knowledge so precious to the well-being of our race is brought together, inspected, sifted, compared, analysed, and then consolidated and enhanced, is the common concern of the civilised world, and it is the special concern of this country, which has not been slow to express, through those who have a right to speak in its name, its sense of the respect and gratitude which are due to its distinguished visitors and to the errand on which they come. At the outset of what I may have to say, it is right once more to note with thankful satisfaction the international character of this great gathering. Nations are the creations of providence acting in history. They have their frontiers, determined sometimes by the limits of race and language, sometimes by the barriers of seas and mountains. They have as nations their distinguishing characteristics for good and evil; and the feeling which binds a man to his country has its divinely appointed foundations in nature not less truly than that stronger feeling which binds him to his family and his home. But as the family is greater than the man, and the nation greater than the family, so the human race represents a greatness which altogether transcends that of the nation. Here in this temple of Jesus Christ, which also bears the name of the glorious apostle whose life-work it was to break down the walls by which Jewish nationalism would fain have kept for ever the rest of the world at a

distance from its God,—here, if anywhere, we may remember that there are truths and duties before which national barriers of feeling rightly disappear. Like those councils of the Church which in ancient and more recent days have brought together representatives from nations and races parted by the prejudices and the hostilities of ages,—like the great heart of the apostle which in the unity of the early Christian body could discern no difference between Jew and Greek, between barbarian and Scythian, between bond and free, so a meeting such as the present rallies the thoughtful and benevolent forces of humanity on a splendid scale, silences the jealousies, the misunderstandings, the quarrels, which too often part and keep asunder even the elect of intelligence and goodness, and in the double name of science and philanthropy presents an array of powerful and well-stored minds, such as perhaps never met together before in London, at least, for the purpose of doing the best that the modern world can do for the physical well-being of the human race. Science and philanthropy did I say? Yes, and it is a combination which at once carries us over the interval of 1800 years to the feet of Jesus of Nazareth, teaching in the assemblies and healing the diseases of His contemporaries. In Him surely we are allied to the highest and the largest knowledge and the most disinterested efforts for the physical and moral welfare of man that our earth has ever seen. He “went about the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every manner of disease among the people.”

Just consider the predominant character of His recorded miracles.

If we adopt the common but not altogether satisfactory division of them into works of power and works of mercy, there are of the former thirteen, and of the latter twenty-six. Of these last, three are cases of restoration to life, six are cures of demoniacs—forms, these, often, of mental disease in which what is physical is mysteriously intermingled with what is moral and spiritual—while seventeen cures that He effected were all cases that might any day have presented themselves for treatment in a London hospital. Not only the blind, the deaf, the dumb, but leprosy, fever, paralysis, incurable weakness, dropsy, an issue of blood of twelve years' standing, a maimed limb, a laceration, passed under that tender and healing touch. And, indeed, some of His works of power (as they are called) over nature had a like object with these, His miracles of healing mercy, as when, to allay human hunger, He fed the five or the four thousand, or procured a draught of fishes when the skill of the fishermen had failed. These single acts, remember, each of them, were merely a sample of a habit. We all remember the hyperbolic reference to the number of our Lord's unrecorded works at the close of the fourth Gospel, and such passages as that before us show that the earlier writers of our Lord's life have only selected a few typical specimens of actions which were very numerous indeed. Times, indeed, there were in His ministry when it might even have seemed that the human body had a greater claim on His attention than the human soul. Such was that occasion which St. Mark describes in the first chapter of his Gospel, when St. Peter's mother-in-law had just been cured of a fever at Capernaum. “And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed

many that were sick of divers diseases." If we may reverently compare this scene with its modern analogies, it bears less a resemblance to anything that occurs in the life of a clergyman than to the occupation of a physician to a hospital on the day of his seeing his out-patients. There is, indeed, all the difference in the world between the best professional advice and summary cure such as was our Lord's. But we are, for the moment, looking at the outward aspects of the scene, and it shows very vividly how largely our Lord's attention was directed to the well-being of the bodily frame of man.

Now it would be a great mistake to suppose that this feature of our Saviour's ministry was accidental, or was inevitable. Nothing in His work was accident: all was deliberate: all had an object. Nothing in His work was inevitable, except so far as it was freely dictated by His wisdom and His mercy. To suppose that this union in Him of prophet and physician was determined by the necessities of some rude civilisation, such as that of certain tribes in Central Africa and elsewhere, or of certain periods and places of mediæval Europe when knowledge was scanty, when it was easy and needful for a single person at each social centre to master all that was known on two or three great subjects—this is to make a supposition which does not apply to Palestine at the time of our Lord's appearance. The later prophets were—all of them—prophets and nothing more—neither legislators, nor statesmen, nor physicians. In John the Baptist we see no traces of the restorative power exerted on some rare occasions by Elijah and Elisha; and when our Lord appeared, dispensing on every side cures for bodily disease, the sight was just as novel to His contemporaries as it was welcome. Nor are His healing works to be accounted for by saying that they were only designed to draw attention to His message, by certificating His authority to deliver it, or by saying that they were only symbols of a higher work which He had more at heart in its many and varying aspects—the work of healing the diseases of the human soul. True it is that His healing activity had this double value: it was evidence of His authority as a divine teacher: it was a picture in detail addressed to sense of what, as a restorer of our race, He meant to do in regions altogether beyond the sphere of sense.

But these aspects of His care for the human body were not—I repeat it—primary: they were strictly incidental. We may affirm reverently, but with certainty, that His first object was to show Himself as the deliverer and restorer of human nature as a whole—not of the reason and conscience merely, without the imagination and the affections—not of the spiritual side of man's nature merely, without the bodily; and, therefore, He was not merely teacher, but also physician, and therefore and thus He has shed upon the medical profession to the end of time a radiance and a consecration which are ultimately due to the conditions of that redemptive work to achieve which He came down from heaven.

Teaching and healing. This, the motto of our Lord's life, is the motto also of the profession of medicine. It also not merely heals but teaches: it also is in its way a ministry of prophecy, with truths and virtues specially entrusted to it, that it may recommend and propagate them. It is little to say of this great profession in our time that it

is a keeper and teacher of intellectual truth. We all know that it has furnished of late years to literature some of its most enterprising efforts in the way of speculative thought; and the remarkable address with which this Congress was opened will have informed the public generally, while it vividly reminded the audience which listened to it, of the additions which within the last score of years medical science has made to human knowledge—additions so vast, so intricate, as to be for the moment well-nigh unmanageable, and of the immense perspectives which are thus opening before it. On these high themes it would be impossible to dwell here; but, as a prominent teacher of truth, medical science, I may be allowed to say, has ever powers and responsibilities which are all its own. The physician can point out with an authority given to no other man the present operative force of some of the laws of God. The laws of nature, as we call them—its observed uniformity—are not less the law and will of God than are the ten commandments. Nay, that moral law finds its echo and its countersign in this physical world; it is justified by the natural catastrophes that follow on its neglect. It is not the clergyman, but the physician, who can demonstrate the sure connection between unrestrained indulgence and the decay of health and life—who can put his finger precisely upon the causes which too often fill even with strong young men the corridors not only of our hospitals, but also of our lunatic asylums, who can illustrate by instances drawn from experience the tender foresight of moral provisions which, at first sight, may appear to be tyrannical or capricious. To be able to show this in detail—to give men thus the physical reasons for moral truth—this is a great prophetic power; this is a vast capacity which we, who stand in this pulpit, might well envy in its possessors: this is a vast responsibility which they who wield it, like other prophets, must one day account for.

The physician can point out, with an authority which is felt to be so real in no other man of science, the true limits of human knowledge. He knows that to-day science is as ignorant as she was two thousand years ago of what, in its essence, life is. Of the physical conditions under which life exists, science has, indeed, much that is wonderful to say, and she has, indeed, just been telling us, through the voice of one of her most distinguished sons, that life, viewed on its physical side, is the sum of the joint action of all parts of the human system—of the lower or inferior as well as of the higher or vital parts—that there is no one seat of life, since every elementary part, every cell, is itself a seat of life. And we listen with sincere respect and interest; but we observe that this only states, after all, in language of beautiful precision, what are the points of contact between life and the animal organism. We still ask what life is in itself, and we hear no answer. No. Just as science pauses before each atom of matter, unable to satisfy herself whether it be infinitely divisible or not, so, when she has exhausted the skill of the anatomist in endeavouring to surprise the life-principle in some secret recess of the animal frame, she again must pause to confess that the constituted essence of the life-principle itself is a mystery still beyond her ken. And never, never is science more worthy of her high prophetic duty than when she dares to make this confession. True science, like prophecy, from Moses downward, knows not merely what

she knows, but the limits of her knowledge; and when she is tempted, if ever, to forget this, as by him who whispered once into the ear of the dying Laplace some praise of his reputation, which seemed for the minute to ignore it, she replies, with the great Frenchman, "My friend, don't speak of that. What we know is little enough: what we are ignorant of is enormous."

The physician is a prophet, and this character is never so apparent as when life is drawing towards its close. Often when to the sanguine ignorance of friends the bright eye and the buoyant step seem to forbid serious apprehension, medical science already hears not uncertainly the approaching footsteps of the King of Terrors. There is a point, my brethren, at which all forms of highly-cultivated knowledge become instincts, and are certain of their judgment, even when they are not able at the moment to produce a reason; and no man can have passed middle life without being struck with the sort of "second sight," as it may seem, which is at the command of an accomplished physician.

Would that I might be permitted in the freedom of my ministry to say one word as to the use of this tremendous power. Too often when science knows that death is inevitable the dying man is allowed to cherish hopes of life with a view to possibly prolonging in him for a few days or hours more the struggle for mere physical existence, and thus the precious, the irrevocable moments pass during which the soul, by acts of faith, and hope, and love, and contrition, may unite itself to the divine Redeemer, and may prepare for the presence chamber of the Judge. It is not for this, brethren, that your higher knowledge is given you; it is not for this that the departed will thank you when you, too, meet them in the world of spirits.

But the medical profession may also be a great teacher of reverence. Whatever else may be said of our age, reverence is not one of its leading characteristics. We have, as we think, explored, examined, and appraised all the sublimities, all the sanctities, all the mysteries which commanded the awe of our less cultivated or more imaginative forefathers, and as a generation we have ceased to revere; and the absence of reverence, depend upon it, is a vast moral loss. What is reverence? It is the sincere instinctive acknowledgment of a higher presence which awes and which attracts the mind that gazes on it. We grow up insensibly towards that which we revere, and to revere nothing is to fall back upon self as the true standard of attainable excellence, and to be dwarfed and blighted proportionately. Now, the profession of medicine should be ever an apostolate of reverence; for its field of action is the human body, and in no other school can reverence be learned more surely than here. We Christians, indeed, have, to speak frankly, our own reasons for thinking this. As we contemplate the human body, we cannot forget what our faith teaches us about its origin, about its present purpose, about its coming destiny. We know that the body, like the soul, is from God. It is, perhaps, on earth, His noblest visible handiwork. No lines of beauty, it has been said by a great artist, rival those of the human form; no mechanism in any other animal is so perfect. For our part, as we contemplate the human body, we cannot forget its Author. Even if evolution should win for itself a permanent place in our conceptions of the past history of man, it would still leave practically untouched the great question of man's origin. When every step of this process continued through

ages has been elaborated by science, the question will still remain, Who furnished the original material, the primal monad? Who gave the impact which set the process in motion? Who prescribed the evolutionary law? Who governed its application? Above all, who must have intervened at some critical moment to endow the subject of the evolution with a spiritual and reflective faculty, making him thus visibly to differ, not in degree, but altogether in kind, from the creatures that are around him? That which gives every work of God its first title to interest—namely, the fact that it is His work—confers this title with especial emphasis on the human body.

And then, next, what is the present function of the human body? We see in it at once a tabernacle and an instrument: it is the tabernacle of the soul. That the soul is distinct from it,—that that in us which consciously perceives, thinks, wills, acts, which knows itself to be one and identical from week to week, from year to year, while the body is perpetually changing both its substance and its outward mien—this is for us a fact of experience. In order to be certain of it we do not need a revelation. We know that we cannot understand the functions of the body unless we know something about the functionising organs,—that, for example, we cannot understand the circulation of the blood unless we know what the heart is, what the arteries, what the veins; but we can understand the intellectual and moral faculties, we can arrange, we can appreciate them, while we are altogether in ignorance of the nature and functions of the brain. In short, we are conscious that the “I” which is the seat and centre of these faculties, is something radically distinct from the bodily organism which is most immediately related to it, but which is related to it undoubtedly, partly as a tabernacle, and partly as an instrument. The soul inhabits and employs the body; the body is the veil, and it is the interpretation of the soul. Who does not know how the soul of man speaks through the voice with its intonations varying from moment to moment, according to the dictates from within? Who has not felt how the soul of man speaks through the eye?—how, when the eye is dull and languid, when it is bright and animated, when it flashes forth fire and passion—these are the moods of the immaterial spirit within? Who does not perceive the eloquence of gesture, specially of involuntary gesture, that it is also the language of something infinitely greater than matter and force? We note its successive phases of energy and repose, of suggestiveness and insistence, of conciliation and defiance; and we read in characters that are not to be mistaken the language of the being which dwells within the frame, whose movements it thus controls. More than this, we Christians believe that the tenant of our material frame may and does become the temple of a life higher than its own, that our bodies are temples of the eternal Spirit, because He, in a mode which we cannot understand, makes our spirits to be His temples. And thus the human body is, in our eyes, itself precious and sacred. It is an object of true reverence, if only by reason of Him whom it is thus permitted to house and to serve.

And, again, there is the destiny of the body. As we Christians gaze at it we know that there awaits it the humiliation of death and decay. We know that it will be resolved into its chemical constituents, but we look beyond. We know also that it has a future. Beyond the hour of death is the hour of resurrection; beyond the humiliations of the coffin

and the grave, there is the life which will not die. The reconstruction of the decayed body presents to us no greater difficulties than its original creation ; and if we ask the question how it will be, we are told, upon what is for us quite sufficient authority, that our Lord Jesus Christ "shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." And thus in this life the body is like a child that has great prospects before it, and we are interested in, and we respect it accordingly. But you, gentlemen, you our visitors, can add to these motives for reverence another, which appeals not to faith, but to experience. It has been finely said that among the students of nature irreverence is possible only to the superficial. You are too conscious of the great powers in whose presence you move and work, of the mysteries above, around, within you, of the magnificent and exhaustless subjects whose fringes you seem only to have touched when you know most about them, to escape from the awe which all true knowledge, with its ever-present consciousness of a much larger ignorance, must always inspire. In this matter, science, whatever be her immediate interests, is ever the same. You can understand Pascal,—“The highest effort of reason is to admit that there is an infinity of things which altogether and perpetually transcend it.” You can understand our own Newton comparing his finest achievements to those of the child playing with the waves as they break upon the sand. The temper of true science is ever the same, and as you move along the awful frontier where the world of matter shades off into the world of spirit, not the least service that you can do to the men of this generation is by teaching them the mysteriousness of what they see and what they are, to prepare them to do some sort of justice to what revelation has to say about what they do not see, and what they will be.

And, lastly, the profession of medicine is, from the nature—I had almost dared to say from the necessity—of the case, a teacher of benevolence. Often must we have witnessed the transformation—one of the most striking and beautiful to be seen in life—by which the medical student becomes the medical practitioner. We may have known a medical student who is reckless, selfish, or worse, and we presently behold him as a medical practitioner leading a more unselfish and devoted life than any other member of society. “What,” we ask—“What is this something, akin surely to ministerial ordination, that has wrought this altogether surprising change, that has brought with it such an inspiration of tenderness and sympathy?” The answer, apparently, is that now, as a practitioner, he approaches human suffering from a new point of view. As a student he looked on it as something to be observed, discussed, analysed, if possible—anyhow, lectured upon; anyhow, examined in. As a practitioner he is absorbed by the idea that it is something to be relieved. This new point of view, so profoundly Christian, will often take possession of a man’s whole moral nature, and give it nothing less than a totally new direction; and thus, as a rule, the medical practitioner is at once a master and a teacher of the purest benevolence—not only or chiefly those great heads and lights of the profession, whose names are household words in all the universities of Europe, and who have some part of their reward, at any rate, in a homage which neither wealth nor birth can possibly command; but

also, at least, in this country, and, pre-eminently, the obscurer country doctor, whose sphere of fame is his parish or his neighbourhood, upon whom the sun of publicity rarely or never sheds its rays. His life is passed chiefly in the homes of the very poor, and amidst acts of the kindest and most self-sacrificing service. For him the loss of rest and the loss of health are too often nothing less than a law of his work; and as he pursues his career so glorious yet so humble, from day to day, his left hand rarely knows what his right hand doeth. And yet, such men as these, in the words of Ecclesiasticus, maintain the state of the world while all their desire is in the work of their craft. They pour oil and wine, as can, or do, few or none others, into the gaping wounds of our social system: they bind and heal, not merely the limbs of their patients, but the more formidable fractures, which separate class from class. And unless He whom now we worship on His throne in heaven is very unlike all that He was 1800 years since on earth, such lives as these must be, in not a few cases, very welcome indeed to Him, if only for the reason that they are so like one very conspicuous aspect of His own.

And here may I add one word? If it is knowledge which makes the profession of medicine so capable of a lofty and practical benevolence, must not we hope that this knowledge may not be purchased at the cost of the virtue which it promotes? It would ill become me to attempt to suggest in detail what pathological experiments are necessary or legitimate; but may it not be said that they are only justified, if at all, by some recognised philanthropic aim as distinct from the general instinct of scientific curiosity?

Occasions like the present always recall the memories of the dead, and it is impossible not to think of two Englishmen among others who were still living a few months since, and who, had they still been here, would have welcomed and been welcomed by this Congress with no stinted enthusiasm. If, as having had the happiness of knowing them, I recall their names, it is because in their several ways they illustrate very remarkably those aspects of the medical profession to which your attention has been directed. Of these, the first represented the speculative and scientific rather than the practical side of the profession. He filled with great distinction a chair in his university. He devoted himself with unwearied industry to all that could illustrate the past history of man. He was almost as much at home in the early formation of language as among the skulls and bones which might be unearthed in a Yorkshire barrow; and nothing was trivial for a mind which believed firmly in the unity of truth, and in the value of all contributions, of whatever kind, towards attaining it. But that which should be especially recalled here and to-day is his reverent bearing as he traversed that obscure region which divides the physical from the supersensuous world, his resolute faith in immaterial existence, his profound sense of over-awing mystery everywhere penetrating the great subject which had been entrusted to his care and skill, the child-like consciousness that he was beginning to learn when to others he seemed to be already a master of sentences. Long will his university, long will his country, mourn the late Professor Rolleston. And the other of whom I am thinking, and who was the first to leave us, illustrates by his career no less remarkably the connection between the medical

profession and active philanthropy. Whether it was within the walls of Kars, or on the later battle-fields of the Danube, wherever there was suffering, wherever there was oppression and wrong, the quick eye and tender heart of Dr. Humphrey Sandwith were ready for even heroic service. For him medicine was ever the right hand of philanthropy, and his philanthropy was always quickened by a keen sense of social and human justice. Many years, too, will pass before a life so unselfish in its aim as his can pass from memory.

Whatever else may be said of a cosmopolitan occasion like the present, this assuredly must be said of it,—that its members will not meet again in this life. In a few hours, gentlemen, you will be on your way to all quarters of the civilised world, bearing with you, let us trust, solid additions to the knowledge which you brought us, and cherishing some kindly memories of this great city and of the English people; but you will never, never, all of you meet again. This solemn thought must surely deepen the sense of responsibility with which you address yourselves anew to the task of influencing the thought of your age and of promoting its works of mercy. The two objects are in the last analysis strictly one. Never forget that there is a truth beyond, and higher than, the truths of physics,—that there is a better and a brighter world than the world of sense. Of that world our divine Redeemer did not lose sight when He healed so mercifully the woes of this; and medical science will in the long run assert its true claim to human admiration and gratitude when it keeps its eye fixed upon those summits of truth to which indeed it may most persuasively point us on, but which we can only reach under the guidance of faith.

FINAL PERSEVERANCE NOT INEVITABLE.

Preached on Sunday Afternoon, August 14th, 1881.

"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."—Matthew xxiv. 13.

THROUGHOUT that portion of the Gospel which has been read this afternoon as the second lesson, it is often very difficult indeed to say whether our Lord is speaking of the fall of Jerusalem or of the end of the world. The first event was to be a kind of rehearsal, on a small scale, of the second. As yet, it is possible the two events were confused in the minds of the apostles, and thus much of what our Lord said would be applicable in different degrees to both. As the earthly Jerusalem would be compassed by the army of Titus, and burnt with fire, so the earth, and all things that are in it, would, one day, through whatever intermediate agency, be burnt up too. In either case, the unreflecting many would remain in the City of Destruction, and share its doom. In either case, those who noted with awe and expectation the instructive movements of God's providence would have fled for safety to the appointed refuge. "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place"—"Whoso readeth," adds the evangelist, "let him understand;" in other words, this means something more than may appear at first sight—"then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Is He advising what to do when the earthly Jerusalem is visibly doomed? Undoubtedly. And yet His words point on to the greater event beyond. In both cases, remark, the catastrophe is preceded by a parade of religious, or, rather, I should say, of irreligious delusion—by false Christs. In both cases it is heralded by physical, as well as by political troubles. In both cases the faithful servants of God are exposed to persecution before the end arrives; and it is in view of this complication of anxieties that our Lord says, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

The importance of perseverance in the service of God is a point which occupies, we may venture to say, a leading place in our Lord's teaching. We know from St. Matthew's Gospel that He used these very words, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved," on a different and earlier occasion, in His address to the twelve apostles on sending them out to their work. In the same way He rewarded their perseverance up to a certain point by an especial promise—"Ye are they who have continued with Me in My temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me." And, in like manner, He warns that no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God; and He depicts the pitiable state of the man who began to build and was not able to finish. And to the same purpose were His parting precepts to the apostles, "Continue ye in My love," "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love;" and His reference to His own life-obedience, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work;" and, in His intercessory prayer, "I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do;" and His sixth word on the cross, "It is finished."

The vital importance of perseverance enters no less constantly into the teaching of the apostles. St. Paul warns the convert from heathenism at Rome, "Thou standest by faith: be not high-minded, but fear." He bids the Corinthians "so

run that they may obtain;" or, again, to be "steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord;" or, again, as in to-day's Epistle, in view of the conduct of apostate Israel of old, while they stand, to "take heed lest they fall." The Galatians had fallen away from the apostolic doctrine into Judaizing error, and, accordingly, St. Paul wonders that they had "so soon removed from Him that called them into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel." He asks if they are so foolish as to think that, "having begun in the Spirit, they will be made perfect in the flesh." The Thessalonians are bidden "not to be weary in well doing." Timothy is told by the apostle in his very last epistle, that his master "has fought a good fight, has finished his course, has kept the faith, so that henceforth there is laid up for him the crown of righteousness." And the Epistle to the Hebrews—written, as it was, to a Christian church under peculiar temptations to relapse altogether into Judaism—is full of this question of perseverance. It contains the two passages on the difficulty of recovering those who have apostatized, which excited so much attention, and occasioned so much perplexity in the early ages of the church. And the other apostles write to the same effect. St. John warns the elect lady and her children, "Look to yourselves that ye lose not those things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward," and St. Jude describes the fate of those "wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." And our Lord's warnings to the angels—that is, to the bishops of the seven Asiatic churches—often turn upon this very point. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," He says to one. "Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown," He says to another.

And in the early ages of the church, this question of perseverance occupied the attention of Christians, very much more than has been the case in modern times. Few of the great teachers of the primitive church leave this matter altogether untouched. Cyprian, at Carthage, wrote on it with a fervour which was heightened by the persecution raging all around him. St. Jerome enters on it at length with one of those many correspondents in whose spiritual welfare he felt so deep an interest. One of the most valuable of the treatises of St. Augustine is that on the gift of perseverance. In our days it is much more in the background of thought, even in the case of serious Christians. They take it for granted that they will and must somehow persevere; that, as they grow older, they will certainly grow better; that they will go, too, from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion. And if we ask how and why, and can get any sort of answer, the answer will be, sometimes, by the inert force of religious habit; sometimes, by the active force of natural will; sometimes, by the irresistible force of divine grace.

It is assumed, then, first of all, that perseverance will be easy as a matter of habit. Once be a Christian, and once have formed Christian modes of thought and practice, and why should you not go on? The Christian life, it appears, is thus conceived of, as though it were moving on a line of rails which prevents divergence to the right hand or the left. The line may traverse a district with a very broken surface; sometimes it is carried along a high embankment; sometimes it buries itself in deep cuttings, or in dark tunnels; but its general direction is constant; its gradients are moderate; the rolling stock which is placed on it goes forward as a matter of course; and nothing but a catastrophe—a catastrophe which a study of the doctrine of chances seems to make highly improbable—can interfere with safe arrival at the terminus at the other end of the line. Habit is like those iron rods, it appears, which, without checking movement, prescribe its direction, and so secure the attainment of the end.

Habit, no doubt, my brethren, is a great power in human life. If we were to examine all the acts of a single day, and the motives which produce them, we should, probably, find that nearly three-quarters were dictated by habit. We walk, eat, sleep, move our bodies, manage the several faculties of our minds, very largely indeed by habit. We do not think of each successive act; we do it instinctively, as we say, because the law of habit impels, or compels us. And there is no doubt that many of our religious duties become, in the course of years, matters of habit—sometimes in a good sense, sometimes in a bad; in a good sense, when habit prompts obedience, but does not deaden the conscious seriousness and meaning which we throw into each particular act; in a bad sense, when all such consciousness and meaning has gone, and habit is merely the surviving mechanism, or the skeleton of a life that is no more, carrying on the outward framework of prayer and piety, while the spirit, the motive, the temper, the purpose which should animate it

is gone. This is what we rightly call formalism—that is, not the observance of forms as such, since some forms are necessary for all religions, even the most puritanical; but the observance of forms which are mere forms—forms which have no living meaning; forms which are prescribed by habit, and which are not seconded and vivified by the inner devotion, by the deliberate intention of the soul. It is clear that habit of this kind, extending only to the outer framework, and not to the spirit, the motive, the temper of the religious life, is no sort of guarantee for perseverance. It is in no kind of condition even to withstand a shock, much less to surmount an obstacle. It is like the scaffolding still remaining in the air when the building which it supported, and which, in turn, supported it, is removed. It is clearly in a very precarious situation; it may even come down with a crash at any moment.

It is supposed, secondly, that perseverance can be achieved by determination, by the resolute effort of a strong natural will. We English, it has been said by a popular writer, are, as a rule, by nature Pelagians—a self-reliant people, with good reasons in the past for knowing that we have qualities which can hold their own against the world. We carry sometimes into our religious life a temper which is strangely out of place in it. Will can do a very great deal in the order and sphere of nature. It can make the most of time; it can crush down opponents; it can silence insurgent passion; it can make light of even formidable obstacles; it can lash decaying strength into unwonted effort: it can conquer lassitude, fear, misgiving. Most self-made men, to use the familiar phrase, are men of some intelligence, indeed, and common sense, but of still more will. Will, it is, that has surmounted the successive difficulties that hampered them, and, by conquering which, they are what they are.

But it does not follow from this that will can persevere at pleasure in such a region as that of the Christian life. The will can do much—almost everything, except be sure of itself under circumstances which are against the grain of nature. The will to persevere must exist in force before the will can achieve perseverance; and such a will to persevere is not a matter of course, like the will to get on in business is with one class of men, or the will to rise in society with another class. The will to be a downright Christian to the end of life must be rooted in a deep, constantly present sense of the preciousness and the difficulty of being a downright Christian, and of the need of constant supplies of grace and strength from Almighty God in order to be one. Without God we are not able to please Him. A natural will, however strong, is a sorry substitute in this matter for supernatural grace.

And then again—and in a very different quarter—it is assumed that if a man once has the grace of Jesus Christ in his heart, he must persevere in the Christian life. This is what is called the doctrine of indefectible grace. It is no part of the apostolic teaching. It is a creation of the genius—the misdirected genius, as we must think it—of Calvin. Calvin wanted to find and proclaim a sort of personal assurance of salvation which might stand timid and doubtful minds in good stead in an age of religious revolution, when the old landmarks of authority were being lost sight of, and there was a disposition abroad to despair of the power of religion to present anything whatever as fixed and certain. To the mass of minds in this condition, Calvin said in effect, "Only be satisfied that you have once received God's grace in conversion, and it must be well with you. His grace, once given, is never withdrawn. His grace, once given, proves His will to save you; and is not His will stronger than yours? Did not our Saviour say that none should pluck out of the Father's hand those whom the Father had given to Him? Did not St. Paul lay down the rule that 'the gifts and calling of God are without repentance'—in individuals, it may be presumed, no less than in races? Did not St. John teach that 'he that is born of God sinneth not,' and that 'the wicked one toucheth him not'? Is it, after all, strange"—this is the emphatic point of the argument—"is it strange that if the Almighty and infinite Being deigns to visit us at all, His lightest touch should have a resistless power? And can our hearts refuse to welcome a message which thus summarily relieves us of anxiety, and makes us comfortable for the rest of our existence?" Calvin, my brethren, as I have said, was a man of genius; but, it may be questioned whether any misrepresentation of the apostolic teaching, since the days of the apostles themselves, has, upon the whole, done more mischief than this particular theory of indefectible grace. It is, I say, a misrepresentation of the teaching of the New Testament, since it entirely ignores the drift of the greater part of it, in order to fix a particular sense upon a few isolated passages.

When our Lord says that none can pluck from the Father's hand those who are His, He does not say that they who are His may not themselves break or fall away from Him. What else is the meaning of that terrible question, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" When St. Paul says that God's gifts are without repentance on God's part, he does not add that they cannot be rejected by man, since this had already been the case, with that very generation of Jews about which he was writing to the Romans. When St. John says that "He that is born of God sinneth not," he does not forget his own saying, "If we (Christians) say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." He only urges that that in us which sins is not the principle of the new life; that a regenerate man, so far as his new nature controls him, does not sin.

On the other hand, our Lord and His apostles treat human nature as free, practically, to choose evil, even when it is under the influence of grace. Not to multiply quotations, consider that pathetic account of his own self-discipline which St. Paul gives to the Church at Corinth, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." Why? "Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a reprobate." There is no question, I take it, that St. Paul was in a state of grace when he wrote the first epistle to the Corinthians, and, if language has any meaning, there can be as little question that he distinctly puts before his mind, as a fearful possibility, the contingency of his forfeiting—apostle as he was—by an unchastened life, the great graces which he had received, and that altogether.

The ruinous consequences of this misapprehension about grace are not far to seek. It reduces, for instance, first of all, Christian sacraments to the level of mere charms. Christians believe that the sacraments are means of grace; that grace, so far as we know, at least with certainty, not otherwise to be had, is certainly conveyed through them as its appointed channels. But if this grace, instead of being a Divine gift which may be forfeited, and is forfeited by unfaithfulness in the recipient, is held to be an endowment which, once conveyed, can never possibly be withdrawn, then the sacraments become the means of insuring our salvation mechanically, and without influencing our lives. And those persons who, unhappily, believe grace to be indefectible, have tried to avoid this error by taking refuge in an error still greater, and denying that the sacraments convey grace at all.

And still more mischievous is the notion of indefectible grace upon conduct. It, practically, has lent in many and many a mistaken, but earnest, life, a fancied licence to do what a man likes, since the future after death is assumed to be certain. If grace is indefectible, probation, properly speaking, is at an end, because free-will, properly speaking, is at an end. Nothing remains but a life which, like that of a vegetable, obeys a force which is beyond its resistance. What is this but fatalism, disguised, if you will, in Christian phrases, but fatalism as destructive of the sense of moral responsibility as is the fatalism which coarsely tells us that we can control neither our conduct nor our destiny, since we issue from the blind forces of nature, which only indulge us for a passing moment with the illusion of free-will, ere they bury us again in the folds of matter from which we seem to have emerged? Cromwell, as he lay dying, asked a question which showed that, at the near approach of death, this sad illusion seemed to his clear intellect to be what it really is; but a death-bed is not the place to pass in review an error which has been hugged through life, and his advisers knew too well how to quiet him.

No, brethren, the grace of God does not make our final perseverance inevitable. It makes it possible, probable, morally certain, if you will, but morally, and not mechanically certain. God who has made us free respects the freedom which He has given us. He does not crush it even by His own merciful gifts; and grace no more absolutely assures heaven than does natural will, or the force of habit, conquer the road to it.

And this leads me to ask, What are the causes which make endurance to the end more or less difficult in so very many Christian lives?

There is, first of all, what our Lord calls "The persecution that ariseth because of the Word." In some shape or other this is inevitable. In the text, no doubt, our Lord is thinking, at any rate partly, of literal persecution, such as the first Christians experienced at the hands of the Jews, and, subsequently, of the pagan Roman empire. "They shall deliver you up," He says, "to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for My Name's sake; and then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another." There are persecutions *and* persecutions—great and bloody persecutions, such as a Nero or a Decius could inaugurate on an imposing scale; and, as we know, petty

persecutions which are all that is permitted to the native ferocity of the persecuting temper by the milder manners of a more civilised age. But persecution, whatever its scale, is a trial to perseverance. Persecution is, in any case, friction; and, as we all know, friction, if only it be continued long enough, brings movement to a standstill, until there be a new supply of the impelling force. Men who have done much for Christ have given way at the last under the stress of relentless persecution. And, perhaps, petty persecutions are more trying to perseverance, in some ways, than great ones. Men who would not flinch from the axe or from the stake will yield to the incessant worry of domestic or local tyranny—to the persecutions which make home wretched, or the office or the shop or the dormitory well-nigh intolerable. Why do we pray in the church service that “the evils which the craft and subtlety of the devil or man worketh against us be brought to nought, and, by the providence of God’s goodness, may be dispersed”? It is that we, His servants, “being hurt by no persecutions, may evermore give thanks unto Him in His holy Church.” In other words, it is because persecution involves a serious risk to perseverance.

And then there are, as our Lord says, the false christs and the false prophets. In those days it was an adventurer who traded on the religious enthusiasm of his compatriots—led them out to some desert or to some mountain side to enjoy for a moment the delirium of an impossible delusion, and then, perhaps, to suffer the punishment of a supposed political offence. In our days it is a sceptical friend; it is an article in a review; it is the general atmosphere of the social circle in which we live. Our faith is undermined by people who talk and write in the very best English, and who have so much about them that is winning and agreeable that we cannot believe what is really going on. Still, after a time, we find that we have less hold on the unseen than we had; that prayer is more difficult; that conscience is more sluggish; that religious exertion of all kinds is more unwelcome; and this, I say, means that the soul’s hold on the central realities is, to say the very least, weakened, if that is, indeed, anything like a full and true account of what has taken place. We cannot go on breathing a bad air, and be as we were when we lived high up upon the mountain, unless we take very great precautions. Not to take them under such circumstances as these is to be in a fair way to forfeit perseverance.

And then there is the weariness which steals over thought and heart with the lapse of time. Human faculties, after all, are finite. They spend themselves, and they fall back into lassitude and exhaustion. When the apostles first followed our Lord, they tasted the exquisite pleasure of a new spiritual sensation, fascinating, exhilarating, overpowering in its matchless enjoyment. “We have found the Messiah” included all that was meant by this divine experience. They could say no more. There are moments, my brethren, in all lives which, from the nature of the case, cannot be repeated. Such is the joy of the schoolboy who has just won his first prize. Such is the joy of the young couple who have, in spite of many obstacles, just been wedded. Such is the joy of the parent whose child has recovered from a first and all but fatal illness. So, too, in the mental and moral spheres, the first large and true view of intellectual truth lying out like a landscape before the mind’s eye, the first act of pure and real self-sacrifice—these, too, bring, each in its way, a pleasure too keen and too intense to last, our natural faculties being what they are. We cannot sustain ourselves at these elevations. It is permitted us to mount, but we pass our allotted moments, and then we descend. And so, too, in the highest life of the soul, though here we Christians have divine grace to help us, and the circumstances are not altogether parallel. Yet who that has known it can ever, ever forget the soul’s first distinctly felt vision and embrace of the Christian creed, and of Him who is its centre and its subject! Who can forget that spring-time of the truest life when sacred words, learnt in boyhood, but not yet really understood, blossomed out all at once into a vivid and overpowering meaning,—when the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, the perpetual intercession, were first felt to be moments or acts in the life of a Friend much nearer to us than the very nearest relatives,—when the inestimable love of the redemption, and the transcendent glories of the risen life of Jesus, and the operative presence and power of the Spirit and of the sacraments in the church or body of Christ, first meant for us what the apostle’s words meant to the men who read, first of all, the Epistle to the Ephesians? Those who have known these joys do not, cannot forget them; but they are joys which, in their first buoyancy and freshness, cannot, from the nature of the case, be repeated in this life. St. Paul, we may be sure, himself never lived over again that which followed the scene on the

road to Damascus. St. Augustine never renewed the unique experience which he has described in the most interesting chapter of his "Confessions." And thus it is that, after these great experiences, there is—I do not say a relapse, but a condition of less keenness of insight, less tension of will, less warmth of affections, less conscious effort of intelligence and of sanctified passion; and lookers-on say that the excitement has passed, and that common sense has resumed its sway. And the soul, too, knows that something has passed from it, inevitably, no doubt, and from the nature of the case. And with this knowledge there comes depression; and this depression is, in its way, a trial, permitted, as we may believe, in order to make our service of God more unselfish than it would be if it were sustained throughout life by an uninterrupted sense of ecstasy. But it is a trial under which some men have failed. At such times of depression, the old life, the world, unbelief, the old half-sleeping passions put in a plea for another hearing, and the soul, perhaps, listens. And then it may be—God forbid that I should say it is the case—it may be the case that all is lost, and that perseverance is forfeited.

And once more, there is the trifling with conscience, not necessarily in great matters, but in a number of little matters—omission of morning or evening prayer, or their curtailment; neglect of a regular review of conscience; carelessness as to the objects upon which money is spent, and as to the proportion in which it is given to works of religion and mercy; recklessness in intercourse with others, especially if they are younger or less well-informed. These and like matters help forward a dull and inoperative condition of conscience, which is itself preparatory to a great failure. Nor may we ever forget that, if this is so, we are not really alone; and that there are around us unseen malignant powers who are bent upon our ruin, if they can only effect it.

There is a school of natural philosophers which maintains that in the world of nature there are, properly speaking, no such things as what are called catastrophes—that what look like catastrophes to us are, in reality, only the result of a long series of causes steadily working on until, at last, they find visible expression in the earthquake or the hurricane. And so certainly it is, at least generally speaking, in the moral and spiritual world. When a man is converted to God, to a true life of faith and obedience, be sure that many an influence was obeyed, many a ray of light welcomed, many an attraction of grace cherished and responded to, before the decisive moment came. And a great fall from grace has its appropriate antecedents too—little acts of unfaithfulness—petty disloyalties to light and truth. We do not see the process; but it goes forward none the less, and at last there comes the tragic issue—the breaking away from the realms of light of a Demas or of a Jammenais. The old saying that no man becomes very bad all of a sudden—"Nemo repente fuit turpissimus"—applies to the life of faith as well as of conduct. When a star falls from heaven, we may be sure that there have been subtle and complex causes for some time at work, ere the catastrophe was possible. Oh, it is a fearful tragedy in Christian eyes, when it happens—this forfeiture of perseverance. When, as in the first lesson just read, a Solomon deserts the true God for Baalim and Ash-taroath,—when we are reminded that it is true that the gray-haired saint may fall at last, it is like being wrecked, not in mid-ocean, but almost at the harbour's mouth, and within a measurable distance of safety and of home. To have gone on for years, believing, hoping, loving, as a Christian should,—to have lived for long a life of which, at any rate at times, prayer was the breath, and conscience the motive power,—to have had, as it seems to us, all our delight in the saints that are in the earth and upon such as excel in virtue,—to have been admitted, as a Christian soul can be admitted, to the intimate knowledge—I might dare to say, to the very embrace,—of Christ,—to have passed years, perhaps, even among His body-guard and chosen associates,—and then to lose all—faith, hope, love, the power of prayer, the voice of conscience, the sense of the sacred friendship, the sense of the presence and the communion which is above the world,—to lose all, and to pass out, like the lost apostle, into the darkness of the night,—to pass out and not to return—oh, it is a tragedy! But it has happened again and again, in ancient days, and in our own. It may happen—that is the point to be kept steadily in view—it may happen to any Christian who hears me. Oh, how can we hope to retain the grace—the precious grace—of perseverance?

Perseverance, my brethren, is likely to be secured by three things especially.

First, by a sense of constant dependence upon God, since, as a matter of fact, we cannot subsist spiritually, or in any other way, except with His aid. It is well to bear this constantly in mind. To be self-confident is, of itself, to be in danger, since "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." To be

constantly mindful that the life of the soul depends on God, that His right hand upholds the soul if it is upheld at all—this is to be on the road to perseverance.

And, next, by prayer for perseverance. We have to remember that perseverance is a distinct grace, just like faith, or hope, or charity. It must, therefore, be sought and won by prayer, just as these other graces, and, perhaps, by very importunate prayer. It is a good rule to set apart one day in the week to prayer for particular objects. And Saturday, if I may make the suggestion—Saturday, as the day which is often devoted by serious Christians to preparation for death—is a very good day for prayer for perseverance. Do not be discouraged if, so far as you can see, your prayer does not seem to be answered all at once. God may be testing your integrity of purpose. Remember Elisha's words to the king of Israel who had not the faith that could rightly use the arrows of Israel's deliverance. In order to win perseverance, prayer must persevere. It is after describing all the parts of the Christian's armour—the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of preparation, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit—that the apostle adds, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." That is the most important point, practically speaking, of all.

And, lastly, perseverance is especially assisted by keeping the mind fixed as much as possible on the end of life and on that which follows it. Only let us reflect that death is as certain for each one of us as its time, its immediate cause, its attendant circumstances, are matters of uncertainty, and we begin to see this life and what belongs to it in its true aspect and proportions. We learn to sit lightly to it, and to embark something less than the best half of our hearts in its concerns and its interests. The shore may still be distant, but the sailor keeps his eyes on it as he prays for the skill and the strength to weather the passing storm. On those heights which are beyond the valley of death, the eyes of the predestinate constantly rest, and the sight sustains them in times of trial, of darkness, of despair, which were otherwise fatal. "I should utterly have fainted, but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." The end, brethren, is indeed, well worth the effort; and, since we are in the hands of Infinite Love, the effort will be enduring if the end be kept steadily in view.

THE LAW PREPARING FOR CHRIST.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(Canon of St. Paul's,)

PREACHED IN

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 19TH, 1880.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."—GALATIANS iii. 24.

On the Sunday next before Christmas Day, we cannot do wrong in thinking about some one of the agents or influences which prepared the world for our Lord Jesus Christ. The whole people and history of Israel was in a large sense a preparation for Him. He was its climax; He was its finished product; and when He had appeared Israel had done its real work in the world. Israel prepared the world for Christ in many ways. All that was excellent and saintly in its great men was a shadow of some aspect in the character of Him that was to come. Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, the great messengers who from age to age proclaimed God's truth to Israel, the strong and heroic leaders who brought Israel back from the darkness and from the chains of Babylon—these were all in their various ways types of the great Redeemer. But Israel made ready His path of suffering and of glory by two means beyond all others. First, Israel was the people of prophecy; and prophecy amongst its many other achievements achieved this: it "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." It told the world all about Him before He came; and men might have read, if they would, in the pages of the prophets, what they read afterwards, expressed in other terms, in the pages of the apostles and evangelists—Christ's pre-existent life, His birth of a virgin mother, the character and the effects of His ministry, His profound humiliations, His agonising death, His triumph, and His glory. Over all these books He Himself has traced the motto, "These are they that testify of Me."

But Israel was also the people of the law. The legislation of Sinai was one of seven distinctive glories which, in a passage of critical importance, St. Paul ascribes to Israel; and the law thus given was like prophecy in this: it, too, was meant to lead to Christ. It was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. "The law"—it is one of a group of words round which the thought of St. Paul constantly moves; and he uses it in more senses than one. Here he means by it generally the five books of Moses to which the Jews commonly gave the name; and more particularly he means those parts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, in which are contained the various rules which

God gave to Moses for the moral, social, political, and religious or ceremonial conduct of the people of Israel. This was the law in which, as St. Paul said, the Jew of his day made his boast. He was proud to belong to the race that had received it. This was the law, the possession of which made Israel "a peculiar people," marking it off by a deep-cut line of separation from all the other nations of the world. This was the law which it was the business of every Israelite to obey. In obeying it he would become just; that is such as he ought to be when measured by a higher than human standard, and this legal righteousness it was the object, if he could—it was the glory—of his life to acquire in the greatest possible degree of perfection. Of this law, then, St. Paul says bluntly that its main purpose was not present but prospective; it was not, after all, to be so much prized on its own account as for the sake of that to which it was to lead. It was really like those slaves who were kept in well-to-do households in the ancient world, first to teach the children of their masters roughly, or as well as they could, and then to lead them down day by day to the school of some neighbouring philosopher at whose hands they would receive real instruction: This, then, was the business of the law. It did the little it could do for the Jewish people as an elementary instructor, and then it had to take them by the hand and lead them to the school of Jesus Christ, that great institute which he, the true light of the world, had opened, that he might give in it the true, the highest education to all the races of mankind.

St. Paul had a very strong reason for insisting on this aspect of the law in his letter to the Galatian churches, for these churches had quite recently been visited by certain teachers who made free and unwarrantable use of the names of the great apostles, St. Peter and St. James, and thus tried to persuade the Galatians that the Christian church had not abandoned the ceremonial part of the Jewish law,—that, since it was practised more or less by the Christians of the church of Jerusalem, it was binding upon converts from heathenism all the world over, and that, if the Galatians meant to be genuine Christians and not mere half Christians, they must lose no time in complying with the requirements of the perfect Christian life. To begin with, as they were converts from heathenism, they must forthwith be circumcised; and, when St. Paul wrote, the Galatians, though they were already baptized into Christ, and had put on Christ, were actually busying themselves about getting circumcised. It was too much for the apostle; he can keep no terms with the Galatian Christians; he exclaims, indignantly, "O, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? Behold, I, Paul, say unto you that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." But here, as always, St. Paul rests particular directions upon broad and general truths. Why was circumcision so entirely out of the question for a baptized Christian? Because circumcision was the shadow of the substance which the Christian man already enjoyed; because the law which prescribed circumcision had already done its true work in the world and in history; because the law was meant to lead men to Christ that they might secure a real and not a fictitious or outward righteousness. And Christ had come. He had been incarnate; He had been crucified; He had risen; He had ascended to His throne of glory; and the law had left mankind at

the school of Christ. Where was the sense of leaving the feet of the great instructor to rejoin the slave who had merely shown the way to Him?

Now, the question arises, How did the law lead men to Christ? The law led men to Christ, first of all, by foreshadowing Him. This was true especially of the ceremonial part of it which St. Paul, as we have seen, had more immediately in view when he wrote to the Galatians, although the principle which he lays down applies to the whole law. Now, the ceremonials of divine service which were prescribed to Israel in the law were not ceremonies with no end beyond themselves. It may be doubted whether there are any such things as purely meaningless ceremonies, whether in civil or in religious life, since, human nature being what it is, a ceremony is dropped as soon as it ceases to mean something, and while it lasts it is valued more or less because it does mean something, whether present, or past, or future. The ceremonies of the Jewish law prescribed by such high authority, so detailed, so elaborate in themselves, were not, we may be sure, there for nothing; and they meant much more than the general duty of offering to God praise and sacrifice, since this might have been secured by much simpler rites. What, for instance, was the full meaning of the solemn and touching observance of the Jewish day of Atonement? Many a Jew must have asked himself that question; some may have nearly guessed the answer; but every Christian knows what the answer is when he has read the Epistle to the Hebrews. We know that what passed in that old earthly sanctuary was from first to last a shadow of the majestic self-oblation of the true High Priest of Christendom, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. We know that every action in the service had its counterpart in His self-presentation as crucified before the majesty of the Father; that, while it was intrinsically impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin, it is equally certain that we Christians are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all, and that "by one offering he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It may be urged with justice that this aspect of the ceremonial law is plain enough to us who look back on it all with the New Testament in our hands, but that it can hardly have been plain to the Israelites themselves. We have the key to the meaning of that old ritual. The Jews knew little more than that their ritual meant something, something that awaited them in the providence of God; that it was a shadow of good things to come; but thus much at least they did know, and this knowledge kept them on the look-out for what might be in store for them. Each ceremony was felt to have some meaning beyond the time then present, and so it fostered an expectant habit of mind; and, as the ages passed, these expectations thus created converged more and more towards a coming Messiah, and in a subordinate but real way the ceremonial law did its part in leading the nation to the school of Christ.

But secondly, and most effectively, the law led men to Christ by creating in man's conscience a sense of want which Christ alone could relieve. This was the work of the moral law, of every moral precept in the books of Moses, but especially of those most sacred and authoritative precepts which we know as the Ten Commandments. As a rule of life the law was elaborate and exacting; and, if

the righteousness which it was to confer was to be secured, nothing less than exact obedience was necessary. The law was guarded by those great sayings to which the Christian apostles appealed, "The man that does these things shall live by them." "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Righteousness, then, under the law depended upon exact obedience. But where were the probabilities that this would be rendered by man in his old, unassisted weakness? What was the fact, obvious to all who looked about them and saw what was passing in Jewish society and life? St. Paul prefers to answer this, to him, most painful question in the inspired language of an earlier age. "As it is written," he says, "there is none righteous, no, not one. They are all gone out of the way; they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." And then, to obviate the objection that this language was originally used by an ancient psalmist of the enemies of Israel, St. Paul adds, "We know that what things soever the law saith" (here you see he means by the "law" the whole canon of the Old Testament) "it saith to them who are under the law—that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." This was, indeed, the hard matter of fact. The law was universally disobeyed: its true purpose was now to discover human sin, of which, but for it, man would have been unconscious. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." It was like a torch carried into the dark cellars and crevices of human nature that it might reveal the foul shapes that lurked there, and might rouse man to long for a righteousness which it could not itself confer. Nay, in the process of doing this the law sometimes aggravated the very evil which it brought to light. The presence of a divine rule which forbade the indulgence of human passions had the effect of irritating these passions into new self-asserting activity. "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." In the absence of the law the sinful tendency had been inert; without the law the sin was dead; "but when the commandment" (that is, a given precept of the law) "came, sin revived, and I died." Not that the law was answerable for this result; the law in itself was "holy, just, and good." The cause lay in the profoundly sinful tendency of fallen human nature, but the general result was the same—an aggravated sense of shortcoming. So far from furnishing man with a real righteousness—so far from making him such as he should be, correspondent to the true ideal of his nature, the law only inflicted on every conscience that was not fatally benumbed a depressing and overwhelming conviction that righteousness, at least in the way of legal obedience, was a thing impossible. And this conviction of itself prepared men for a righteousness which should be not the product of human efforts, but a gift from heaven—a righteousness to be attained by the adhesion of faith to the perfect moral Being, Jesus Christ, so that the believer's life becomes incorporate with His, and man becomes such as he should be, or in other words, is "justified by faith."

But, thirdly, the law led men to Christ by putting them under a discipline which trained them for Him. And this is a point which

requires, even more than the preceding, your careful attention. Look around you, my brethren, and ask yourselves, What is the divine plan for training, whether men or nations? Is it not this,—to begin with rule, and to end with principle,—to begin with law and to end with faith—to begin with Moses and to end with Christ? Take the case of a study, say grammar. A boy begins with rules; he learns them by heart without seeing the reasons for them; and he applies them. His one business, first of all, is simply this,—to follow the rule; by-and-bye he comes to see that the rules of grammar are not arbitrary things made by the old schoolmasters out of their own heads, but that these rules could not be other than they are, since they only put into a practical and working shape the principles of language. In other words, the boy ascends from rule to principle; he does not give up rule, but he rests it on the reason or principle which warrants it; he obeys it not for the sake of obedience, but because in view of his larger knowledge he cannot help doing so. Or take the case of a nation in its earlier history. If it is to hold together it must have a strict and stern code of laws. All the earlier national codes are of this character. The first object of a nation and of its rulers is to preserve order. During these earlier ages of its history a nation, is, if we may so say, at school; but a time comes when it reaches manhood. Does it then discard law, and dissolve through some process of revolution into sheer anarchy? If it is wise, most assuredly not. It retains law, probably in a milder form, but it rests law more and more as time goes on upon the public apprehension of the principles which warrant it. The principles of its earlier laws pass into, and become identified with, the public feeling. Public feeling does two-thirds of the work which mere law did at earlier stages of the national life. In other words, the nation has passed by a process of inevitable growth from the reign of law to that of principle. Or take the growth of a man in his apprehension, say of moral truth. What is its rule of development? The child learns from his mother that he must not tell a lie, and that if he is found out he will be punished. Gradually the habit of truthfulness is formed by rule—by rule enforced by punishment; but a time comes when the mind of the boy has grown, and when this rule is seen to rest on principle, the principle that the recognition of truth is the very first condition of all true moral and human life. When this point has been gained, the old rule, "Tell no lies," does not, indeed, disappear, but it is no longer needed. The man who has passed under the sway of principle does not wish to tell a lie. He could not tell a lie without doing utter violence to the whole of his better nature. The reasons against lying have with him passed into a ruling instinct; I had almost said, into a passion. In other words he has been led by law or rule as by a servant of the God who has arranged his education: he has been led to the school of principle.

Well, my brethren, this is what happened on a great scale in God's religious education of the world. St. Paul describes the condition of the people of Israel as that of an heir to a great property, who while he is a child practically lives the life of a servant, though he is really lord or proprietor of the estate. He is "under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father." God began with rule. He gave the Mosaic law, and the moral parts of that law

being also laws of God's own essential nature could not possibly be abrogated; but as rules of life the Ten Commandments were only a preparation for something beyond them. In that old earlier revelation God only said, "Do this: do not do that." In the later or Christian revelation he did much more. He said in effect, "Join yourselves by an act of adhesion of your whole moral nature to the perfect moral Being;" in other words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." When you have done this, and He on His part has in His appointed ways by his Spirit and His Sacraments infused into you His divine life so that you are one with Him, you will not depend any longer mainly upon rules of conduct. You will not disobey him. You will feel that disobedience would be for you impossible. These rules will have ceased to be outward rules by being absorbed into the new life of principle. "How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." The whole question has been decided on higher grounds, and thus we see the apostle's meaning, or part of it, when he says, "That which the law could do, in that it was weak through the flesh"—that is, through the impotence of fallen human nature to obey it, "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to atone for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," which in His condescension He made His own. Why? "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Such, then, is justification by faith. It is so far from being moral anarchy that it is the absorption of rule into the higher life of principle. In the experience of the soul faith corresponds to the empire of principle in the growth of individual character and in the development of national life, while the law answers to that elementary stage in which outward rules are not yet absorbed into principle.

And this leads me to make one or two practical remarks in conclusion. Why do the children of excellent parents often turn out so very badly? Why is there any truth in the comparison of the sons of clergymen to the sons of Pericles, or, alas, in some cases to the sons of Eli? Here we must avoid the danger of thinking to account for all the instances by a single reason; but is not the reason of some, if not of many, of the failures about which I am thinking, this—that parents, in bringing up their children, forget the divine order,—first rule, then principle; first Moses, then Jesus Christ? Many a parent seems to think that the inverse of this order is the road to educational success. He says to himself that the severe education of children two generations or one generation ago was a great mistake; he will have no rules for his children, and will try to supply them with fine, and true, and elevating principles; and thus children are talked to now-a-days about sentiments and feelings and general principles of conduct which they do not understand, while they are allowed all the while to have their own way, and there is no approach to discipline in their early life. Recollect, the child's mind is concrete: it is not abstract. It understands a plain rule enforced by a reward or by a penalty. It does not understand a principle, and, if it has no practical rules put before it to obey, and is only dosed with principles or what are said to be principles, it is not, depend upon it, educated at all. The foolish parent thinks that the time for applying rule will come when the boy is approaching manhood and finds himself

surrounded by the temptations of that time. But the boy who has never learned to obey a rule when he was six or eight years old will not obey anything very easily, whether it be rule or principle, when he is on the verge of twenty. No. Education must begin with the discipline of the law—tender discipline, if you will, but still real discipline—if it is to end safely in the freedom of the life of principle. You cannot begin with Christ and go back to Moses in education or anything else; and a thoughtless sentimentalism which ventures on the experiment is doomed beforehand to the most cruel of human disappointments.

And here, too, we have a word for the guidance of churches. A Christian church from the necessity of the case is based on faith; that is on principle. It represents by its existence the definitive triumph of believing principle over mere outward Jewish rule; it does not discard rule: far from it; but it provides for the good that is to be achieved by rule by insisting always on the higher influence of principle, and thus the true direction of the church's life would seem to be adherence to principle combined with freedom as to all that touches mere outward rule. In modern language Holy Scripture, the three great creeds which guard the faith, the essential conditions of the means of grace—that is the governing and informing principles of the church's life—should all of them be defended to the very last extremity; but as to matters of mere ceremonial and the like, there should be, if we are followers of St. Paul, as much freedom as is compatible with the very elementary requirements of order. Where the faith is held sincerely, the rules of outward observance may be largely left to take care of themselves. The margin of liberty within which devotional feeling at very different stages of its growth finds its congenial expressions should be as wide as possible. We can imagine, perhaps, a different condition of things from this. We can imagine a church in which principle—so to call the truths of faith—is regarded as of comparatively little moment, while rule as to strictly outward matters is treated as vital. We can imagine a church which says to her ministers, "Teach what you will as to the penalties which await the lost in the life to come, even though the author of your faith has said, in the plainest language, that these penalties last for ever; say, if you like, that your Bible is honey-combed with legendary and uncertain matter, provided only that you do not say it too coarsely and too provokingly; but beware, oh, beware, of the crime for which our modern wisdom reserves its sternest condemnations—the crime of wearing a vestment too many, or a vestment too few, since this may expose you to ruder penalties than any which are at the disposal of a spiritual society." We can imagine, I say, a Christian church holding this language. My brethren, I correct myself: we can *not* imagine it; we can only suppose that if she should seem to speak thus some foreign power must for the moment have taken the place of her own pastors, and be using language which they would fain repudiate if they could. Ah! there are few men in ancient history to whom more injustice has been done—ay, in the pulpits of the Christian Church than Junius Gallio, pro-consul of Achaia, in the year of our Lord 53, when St. Paul was conducting his great mission in Corinth. Gallio has been exhibited in thousands of sermons as the master type of indifference to the great concerns of

religion ; whereas, in point of fact, Gallio was a Roman magistrate of the very highest character, who had a perfectly clear idea of the subjects which fell properly within his jurisdiction. His well-known brother, Seneca, the stoic philosopher, said of Gallio that he was loved by everybody, even by those who loved nobody else ; and Seneca dedicated to him two of his most celebrated treatises in terms which show us something of the high character of the man. Gallio, we all know, refused to listen to the Jews when they dragged St. Paul before his tribunal, on the ground that he was asked to interfere in what seemed to him to be a question of words and names—the profound questions as we know which divided the faith of St. Paul and the Christian church from the convictions of the neighbouring Jewish synagogue. But let us suppose that Gallio, although a pagan, had taken a different view of his duty—that he had attempted to decide not only the worth of St. Paul's theological position in opposition to the Jewish synagogue, but the various questions internal to the Christian church, which St. Paul discusses in his First Epistle to the Corinthians,—rivalries between the disciples of Paul and Cephas and Apollos ; the penalty due to the incestuous Corinthian ; the advisability of marriage or of single life in Christians ; the lawfulness of the use of meat offered in sacrifice to idols ; the dress of Christian women in Christian churches ; the behaviour of Christians at the Holy Communion ; or, graver far, the crowning question of the relation of those who denied the resurrection of the dead to the faith of the apostolical Church. If we could imagine Gallio first studying and then pronouncing on these questions, can we imagine how St. Paul would have received his conclusions ? No, my brethren ; we are here altogether in the region of the imaginary ; but this, at least, is certain,—that to lay great emphasis upon minute rules in the case of an ancient Christian church is not in accordance with the divine plan of education, whether in the church or in the world, and that when this emphasis is laid, not by the Church herself but by some other than a proper church authority, the divergence from the divine plan is greatly aggravated, and the prospect of resulting confusion is indefinitely increased. In churches, too, as in education, it is impossible, quite impossible, to go back from Christ to Moses.

But lastly, and above all, here we see what must be the main effort of a Christian life. We Christians are justified by faith by taking our Lord at His word—by believing what He has told us about Himself—by adhering with the whole strength of our inmost life to Him—to Him the perfect moral Being, Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, incarnate, crucified, risen, ascended, for us men and for our salvation. When this supreme act of adhesion, which we call faith, is sincere, all else will—must—follow. The life of principle implies, as a matter of course, all the results and many more of them—all that could be secured by the life of rule. United with Christ, by faith, we share His righteousness ; we are before the eyes of the All-Holy what we should be, not through our own merits, but through His. God grant that we may all know, with an increasing clearness, the happiness of this vital union, the end of God's wisdom in the education of each of us and of the world—the condition which alone enables us to look forward with peace and hope to the dread hour of the judgment.

“NOT WITH OBSERVATION.”

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(Canon of St. Paul's,)

PREACHED IN

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 5TH, 1880.

“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.”—Luke xvii. 20.

THIS was our Lord's reply to a question which the Pharisees put to him as to when the kingdom of God should come. In asking this question the Pharisees were the spokesmen of the great mass of their countrymen: there was a general expectation of a good time coming,—of a time so good, so satisfying to man's best hopes, that it would seem like a reign of God upon the earth. “The kingdom of God.” To the mind of the people at large that cherished expression probably did not convey any very definite meaning. The phrase had come to them across the ages from psalmists and from prophets. It had been repeated by father to son for many a long generation; but if any positive meaning was now popularly attached to it, it was on the whole a meaning which most certainly was not originally intended. My brethren, we all of us read into our religious language, if we use it sincerely at all, the wants and the circumstances of our own lives and our own age. We read our own meaning into this language so often and so resolutely that what it was meant to mean often becomes in our eyes first of all obscure and then improbable. And this is what had happened to the Jews of old. They were, when our Lord came, a conquered people who had not yet forgotten their days of freedom and of glory; and so, in their eyes, the kingdom of God seemed to be merely a new future for their nation, when the sacred soil would be cleared of the presence of the

Roman invader, when the legionary and the tax-collector, and the governors, the lictors and the eagles, would have disappeared all of them in utter rout and confusion from the emancipated land, and when Israel, in her restored unity and strength, would be again what she once had been under David and Solomon, or something yet far more glorious.

This was the kingdom of God of which the Pharisees were thinking when they put their question to our blessed Lord. Having this idea of what the kingdom of God was to be, they asked him when it would come; and he read the true meaning of their question as being, how would they know that it was coming? They thought, naturally and reasonably enough, that such a kingdom as this, succeeding to, and being based on, a great political change, could not come without some tokens of its approach—some symptoms of social and revolutionary movement that would be at least manifest to discerning eyes. How could the fabric of the Roman power, even in a single province, be broken up and disappear? How could a new order of things be prepared to take its place without some indications that could be read of what was coming? When in after years the great empire itself tottered to its fall, men traced the presages of coming ruin long before it came. Long before the Indian Mutiny of 1857 our English Government was warned that mischief was in the air; and the question of the Pharisees was in accordance with all experience when it presumed that a great change, such as they anticipated, could not take place without being preceded by something that would announce it.

Supposing the Pharisees to be right in their idea of the kingdom of God, their question then, or rather the drift of their question, was reasonable enough; but then they were wrong in their fundamental assumption. Our Lord first set aside their expectations as to the coming of the kingdom. He then went on to hint in a few words what in its essence it was. The kingdom of God, he said, cometh not with observation; its advance is not obvious to the senses and the curiosity of men; it moves onwards, it diffuses itself without being perceived, without being commented upon; and the reason for this is that the kingdom is, in its essence, not a political fabric such as the materialized and unspiritual fancy of the later Jews, misled by a false patriotism, had conceived it to be, but a spiritual world, touching this earth, indeed, by its contact with, and its empire over, human souls, but reaching far, far away from the sphere of sense, aye, to the utmost confines of the world invisible. Men were not to say lo! here, or lo! there, for behold the kingdom of God was within them. Its seat of power lay wholly beyond the province and capacity of the eye and the ear: it lay in the hearts, the consciences, the wills of men; and, until the most secret processes of the soul of man be displayed in sensuous forms, beneath the light of day, the coming of such a kingdom as this must needs be “not with observation.”

Observe, the *coming* of the kingdom; for when it had come it could no longer, from the nature of the case, be thus wholly and

altogether invisible. It was to consist of men—in part of living men; and living men who act and speak as members of a common society cannot but attract observation. The visible church is indeed only a part, a very small part, of that vast kingdom of souls which is ruled by God; but when our Lord had given to this company of men a code of conduct in his sermon on the mount, and had sketched its manner of advance and growth in a series of parables, and had bequeathed it his best promises of support and consolation as we have just now heard in his discourse in the upper room, and when he had died and risen from death and ascended into heaven, and had sent down his own eternal Spirit to quicken and invigorate this new society with a superhuman life, and then by the words and acts of his apostles had given to it its complete and final form, so that to the end of time faithful men should know what he, the Founder, had willed it to be, then, surely, it could not escape observation; but its coming—that was without observation; it stole in upon the world as if it had been a breeze or an inspiration. The Roman power stood unshaken in its strength and in its pride; there were no signs of its approaching dissolution; but the divine kingdom had also come; it was even within some of those who heard the announcement; it had been welcomed to their very hearts and minds; but it had not attracted the attention of the world.

"Not with observation." Let us trace this characteristic of the coming of the kingdom of God at some of the most solemn moments of history. Surely, brethren, never did the kingdom of God come among men in a manner so direct, so blessed, and yet so awful, as when he, the King of kings, the infinite and everlasting Being, deigned in his unutterable condescension and love to robe himself with a human body and a human soul in the womb of a virgin mother, and thus in human form to hold high court among the sons of men. Never did the King of heaven so come among us men as when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. Compared with this stupendous event, the greatest catastrophes, the sublimest triumphs, the most critical epochs in the world's whole history, dwindle into insignificance. "God manifest in the flesh" was a phenomenon the like of which had never yet been seen, and which throws every other event in the annals of man utterly into the shade. And what amount of public notice did it attract? What were the thoughts and interests of the mass of men in Palestine, think you, on the day of the nativity? The last news from Rome, the seat of empire, the sayings and doings of the able but capricious statesman who for a few years held in his hands the fate of the civilized world, the last reports from the provinces, from the frontiers, from the Rhine, from the Danube, from the Euphrates, the state and prospects of trade in the Eastern Mediterranean, the yield of the taxes in this province or in that, the misconduct of one provincial governor, or of another, or matters more local than these—some phase of a long controversy between the soldiers and the civilians, between Roman officials and Jewish mobs, between this and that class of a subject

population, the rivalries, the efforts, the failures, the successes, the follies, the crimes, the misfortunes of a hundred contemporaries, the usual staple of human thought and human talk, sometimes embracing the wider interests of the race, more often concentrating itself intensely on the pettiest details of daily private and domestic life,—this it was which, in those days, as in these, occupied the minds and hearts of men. Aye, on that wonderful night, it was so even with the villagers of Bethlehem; they could find no room for the heavenly visitant in their village hostelry; they little heeded the manger grotto outside where he, the Infinite, in human form, was laid alongside of the ox and the ass. Truly, then, the kingdom of God had come, but “not with observation.”

Nor was it otherwise when this kingdom came some years after, proclaimed by his own divine lips as the beautiful vision of a new life and a new world, and taking possession, by gentle but resistless persuasion, of the hearts and imaginations of the peasants of Galilee. No one had noted the steps of its approach or the steps by which it had succeeded. It passed like a secret contagion from soul to soul: one brother brought another; this disciple engaged, apparently without effort, the sympathies of that. Villages, districts, populations were won, they hardly knew why or how, by an invisible charm which opened before their eyes the vision of a higher and brighter world, and whispered that it was attainable. Such was our Lord's presence in Galilee. There were, no doubt, a few decisive words, some acts, too, which awed the multitudes into wonder and into gratitude, but, on the whole, it was a profound and unexplained stirring of the thoughts and hearts of men without anything to challenge the notice of the world. It caused, as yet, but little anxiety to the official chiefs of the Jewish religion in Jerusalem; it was still more unnoticed by the political and military authorities than some new fanaticism among the Zulus would be in London to-day; and yet there it was, the kingdom of God upon earth, which truly thus had come, and “not with observation.”

And when he who was the centre and sun of this movement, Jesus our Lord, had been crucified and had risen, and had ascended into the heavens, and had by the labours of his apostles fully organized and founded this kingdom as his own church, and had sped it on its course with his blessing throughout the centuries, it still for many a year continued to illustrate this its early and divine characteristic; it came among men “not with observation.” It spread from one place to another, from one class or profession to another; it made the intercourse of friends, and the activities of trade, and the discussions of the learned, and the currents of political life in their various ways, its instruments and its messengers. It appeared no one knew exactly when or how, in the camp, in the school, in the court, in the senate. It was at once select and popular; it was rough and refined; it appealed to the heart and the imagination; but it also could take the understanding captive. It had a word of council and guidance for the studious and the thoughtful, as well as a word of warning for the sinful and the indifferent, and a word of

sympathy for the suffering and the poor. A question has often been asked, especially in very modern days, the difficulty in answering which illustrates the point on which I am insisting,—When and by what means did the faith of Christ first reach the city of Rome? It might have been thought beforehand that the answer to that question must be at once forthcoming,—that, whatever else was obscure, there could be no difficulty in naming the agency by which the capital of the ancient world received the faith which was to have such a momentous influence on its later history. Yet, as a matter of fact, the question does admit of no certain reply whatever. There are indeed popular answers enough ready to hand, but they will not, any of them, bear investigation. Did that great apostle whose name has been in later ages claimed by Rome as its especial monopoly, as its crowning glory—did St. Peter introduce Christianity into Rome? The supposition is untenable, and for this reason among others,—that St. Peter could not have been at Rome when St. Paul, some ten years before their common martyrdom, wrote his Epistle to the Romans, in which St. Peter is never once, even remotely, alluded to. St. Paul could not have violated his own rule of not building on another man's foundations without once acknowledging his obligations or his duties to an apostle who had, it is supposed, preceded him. And St. Peter's real visit to Rome is in all probability to be placed at a later date, not more than two or three years before his death. Was St. Paul, then, the author of Roman Christianity? Was he the apostle who founded the Roman church? This, again, is impossible. St. Paul wrote to the Roman church as a church already numerous and flourishing, but which he had never yet had time even to visit. The names which are most nearly associated with the earliest church in Rome, are those of the private and undistinguished Christians, Aquila and Priscilla; and yet there is nothing that can be called evidence which goes to show that they actually introduced the faith into the city of the Cæsars. In fact, the answer to this question is lost in the haze of the earliest Christian history: it could only be given accurately there where it is recorded in the world above. Who they were who first named Christ our Lord in the capital of the empire—whether Christians flying from Jerusalem after the death of St. Stephen, or baptized proselytes returning to their native synagogue on the morrow of the Pentecost—this we know not; we never shall know in this world. There is here abundant room for imaginative conjecture, and in the absence of anything like real knowledge we may observe how remarkably the origin of the Roman church itself illustrates the principle laid down by our Lord, that “the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.”

Now contrast this characteristic of Christ's kingdom with what we find elsewhere. No one would say that the religion of Mahomet made its way in the world without observation. It burst upon civilization as the war-cry of an invading host; it was dictated at the point of the scimitar to conquered populations as the alternative to ruin or death. The history of its propagation throughout the

eastern world was written in characters of blood and fire; the frontier of its triumphs was precisely determined by the successes of its warriors; and it has receded in these last centuries in a degree exactly corresponding to the progressive collapse of the barbarous forces to which it was originally indebted for its earlier expansion. The kingdom of God came not with observation, and we have seen that when it had come it could not but be in some sense observed. Since it was to consist of believing men,—since it was to be, as St. Paul said, "one body" as well as "one Spirit,"—since as an institution with public officers and some territorial arrangements of its own, it so far entered into the sphere of human life and sense. But a time came when, we sorrowfully must admit, our Lord's words no longer describe the manner in which his kingdom was always sought to be advanced among men. Christians were truer to him when they prayed and suffered in the catacombs than when Constantine had reigned and they waited as courtiers in the ante-chambers of the Cæsars. And when, at a later date, amidst the general collapse of the old society, the church remained the one stable institution, standing erect in a world of ruins, her chief pastors became, in the natural course and by the force of events—though they styled themselves servants of the servants of God—princes, ruling the bodies as well as the souls of men, or they took their seats in earthly legislatures, and so their public action commingled with that of the powers of this world, and attracted at least an equal share of human observation. And then even Christian men brought themselves to think that the kingdom of God could somehow be made to come not merely with great observation, but even by the manipulation of material force—in the wake of conquering armies, at the dictates of earthly magistrates, or in obedience to the sword, not of the Spirit, but of the soldier or the policeman. And this gigantic and degrading misconception was undoubtedly due in its origin to an intimacy between the divine kingdom and the powers of this world,—an intimacy of such a sort and character that the methods for extending and guarding an earthly empire seem to be immediately applicable to the extension and the protection of the kingdom of Christ. The days of that old intimacy, as it would seem, are fast passing away all over Christendom, and if, as we look back on them we must regret the honour which our forefathers assigned to religion among the affairs of men, we may reflect that the true strength of Christianity lies not in the outward symbols of its empire, but in the reality of its empire over hearts and wills,—that the kingdom of God which came into the world "not with observation" does not really need provisions of this sort for making it observed, and that a future of the church which may seem to worldly eyes mere poverty and failure may yet contain within itself the springs of a renovating moral force—a force intense and concentrated whereby to win back to the fresh faith and love of the early ages the worn out and decaying energies of a jaded world.

And, as with the church, so with the soul, the law holds good that the kingdom comes "not with observation." When are the first

germs of the kingdom deposited in the soul? It is when in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, the water of baptism is poured on an infant brow. This is what St. Paul calls the "washing of regeneration;" this is what our Lord himself had described as being "born of water and of the Spirit." We see nothing that is not perfectly ordinary and commonplace—a clergyman, a font, the infant, the mother, the god-parents, the few surrounding worshippers; but true Christian faith knows that he is standing there,—he who was crucified in weakness and who reigns in power, present in his divine and resistless might to turn what, but for him, would be an empty and a useless form into a solemn act of most momentous import which is registered above,—to make the child who lies there so that it can offer no resistance to his omnipotent grace a "member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Truly, at a christening we may well reflect that the kingdom of God comes "not with observation." And if in later years, as too generally is the case, the precious grace thus given is lost and sinned away, and nothing but the stump or socket of the divine gift remains without its informing, spiritual, vital power, then another change is assuredly necessary, which we call conversion. And what is conversion? Is it always a something that can be appraised and registered as having happened at this exact hour of the clock,—as having been attended by such and such recognized symptoms,—as announced to bystanders by these or those conventional or indispensable ejaculations,—as achieved and carried out among certain invariable and easily described experiences? Most assuredly not. A conversion may have its vivid and memorable occasion, its striking, its visible incident. A light from heaven above the brightness of the sun may at midday during a country ride flash upon the soul of Saul of Tarsus; a verse of scripture, suddenly illuminated with new and unsuspected and quite constraining meaning, may give a totally new direction to the will and the genius of an Augustine; but in truth the type of the process of conversion is just as various as the souls of men. The one thing that does not vary, since it is the very essence of that which takes place, is a change, a deep and vital change, in the direction of the will. Conversion is the substitution of God's will as the recognized end and aim of life, for all other aims and ends whatever; and thus, human nature being what it is, conversion is as a rule a turning "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," that a man may receive forgiveness of his sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. And this great change itself, most assuredly, "cometh not with observation." The after effects, indeed, appear,—the spirit of self-sacrifice, the unity of purpose which gives meaning, solemnity, force to life, the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, in such measure as belongs to the requirements of the individual character. Certainly, when the kingdom of God has come into a soul the result may be traced easily enough, but the kingdom of God cometh in this case, too, at least, as a general rule, "not with observation."

And so it is with all the more solemn and precious incidents in the life of the spirit of man. They do not court observation, but they elude, they shrink from it. Discussion, publicity, still more recognition and applause, are nothing less than death to them. It is only a shallow stream which catches the ear by its noisy ripples as it forces its way over the pebbles that lie in its bed. Deep waters always run still. Of the greatest lives that are lived in every generation, little or nothing is often heard at the time, if, indeed, anything is ever heard in this human world. The ruling motives in a good Christian, constantly because instinctively acted on, are never referred to. The most solemn voices that reach the soul are caught, not in the excitement of a vast crowd in a lighted church, but in the loneliness of sorrow, or in the silence of the midnight hour, when God is felt to be about the bed, and spying out all our ways, or at an early communion, when the soul hastens to lay its best and freshest efforts of thought and will, unimpaired, untainted, as yet, by the busy cares and intercourse of a working day, at the feet of its adorable Redeemer. In these and many such-like matters it is ever true that "the kingdom cometh not with observation."

But will it ever be thus? In its full solemnity and import the kingdom of God will come to every man, as never before, in death and in judgment. It will be brought home, as we say, to each of us then; it will be inflicted upon our earth-bound tempers, upon our palsied wills, upon our dull and reluctant senses, with an importunity from which there can be no escape. The approaches may even then, too, be gradual and unperceived. Already death, without our knowing it, may be preparing its stealthy march by the seeds of organic disease in a constitution of proverbial and unsuspected soundness. And if, as we heard in to-day's gospel, judgment will be heralded by signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth by distress of nations with perplexity, the meaning and import of these tokens of the coming of the Son of man may well escape all who are not expecting him. The fig-tree and all the trees, to use his own illustration, may shoot forth without our knowing of our own selves that the summer, the eternal summer, is nigh at hand. But at the last, in the act of dying, in the presence of the manifested Judge, the kingdom of God will be borne in upon every human spirit irresistibly in all its blessedness or all its awe. "Every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all the kingdoms of the world shall wail because of him."

God grant that we may take to heart the solemn words of Christ our Lord, certain that, if at this moment there is no token of his coming upon which observation can fix with certainty, yet that the long train of preparation is ever hastening forwards in the invisible world,—ever hastening forwards until at the predestined moment, as a thief in the night, as a lightning-flash passing across the heavens, he comes to judge us.

A Sermon

By the Rev. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(*Canon of St. Paul's,*)

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 29TH, 1880.

"And he said, Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord."—2 KINGS x., 16.

THE Bible is like the world in this—that it contains pictures, not merely of great saints and of extraordinary sinners, but also, and in a very large proportion, of what we now call mixed characters; and thus it surely is true to life, since the majority of men are not eminently holy, or outrageously wicked, but something between the two. In the vast intermediate region of mixed characters there are, indeed, gradations and varieties almost infinite in their complexity, so that, while on the higher frontier of this region the admixture of evil is sometimes inconsiderable, it is enormous—almost overpowering—in the opposite direction. Still, the great majority of men are mixed characters, and when you or I encounter a mixed character, whether described in the Bible or in a modern biography or work of fiction, or moving before us in the scenes of real life, we feel a kinship with it which is easily explained, for it belongs to our own region of existence. We see ourselves more or less reflected in it. Its good points encourage us. Its deficiencies warn us all the more effectively because its general level of attainment is like our own. But, even in daily experience, it is, I apprehend, often easier to be interested in a mixed character than to see exactly what lesson, what warning, it is meant to convey.

Jehu, the founder of the fifth dynasty of the kings of Israel, interests us, partly by his career and achievements, but much more by the problem of his character. As a boy, Jehu was attached to the body-guard of king Ahab. He rode behind his royal master on the road from Samaria to Jezreel, when the prophet Elijah suddenly appeared and denounced God's final vengeance against the murderers of Naboth. Under Ahab's successor Jehu became a soldier of distinction. The reckless fury with which he drove his war-chariot proved that he had no lack of nerve or of muscle; but he must have had credit for other and higher qualities as well, since we find him, while still a young man, commanding the army which was besieging Ramoth-Gilead in the Syrian war; and it was during this siege that an occurrence took place which formed the turning-point of his career. So far as we know, the great prophet, Elijah, never saw Jehu, except when he met him in Ahab's company after the murder of Naboth, on the Jezreel road; but Jehu filled a great place in the prophetic forecast of Elijah. In the vision on Horeb, Jehu is named as the future king of Israel who is to execute the penal judgments of God, although Elijah never himself obeyed the command that was then given to anoint Jehu to this office. But the command, once given, was cherished as sacred in the prophetic order, and it was carried out by the direction of Elisha during this very siege of Ramoth-Gilead. One day, while the leading officers of the besieging

army were sitting together, a wild-looking young man entered and insisted on a private interview with Jehu. After some hesitation Jehu followed him, and then the young prophet poured the sacred anointing oil which he had ready at hand on the head of the future king, and told him in the Lord's name that he was to destroy the whole family of Ahab, and then, having delivered his message, rushed from the house and fled. Jehu returned to the assembled officers, who saw at once from his appearance that something of grave import had passed between the general and his strange visitor. Jehu tried at first to baffle their enquiries. At last he was obliged to tell them what the young prophet had said and done. The officers and, as it seems, the whole army greeted him with enthusiasm. The officers placed him, as if on a throne, at the top of the stairs which led from the central court of the guard-house to its roof; they carpeted the ground beneath his feet with their military cloaks; and the trumpets sounded a royal salute. So far as the camp was concerned, the revolution was complete. It was no longer with Jehu a question of taking Ramoth-Gilead, but of how to carry out the stern duties which were laid on him by the message of the prophet. All communications between the army and the royal city of Jezreel were at once stopped. Jehu himself set off for Jezreel at full speed with his old friend and companion in arms, Bidkar, and with a detachment of cavalry.

And here we come to the two terrible and stern achievements which are associated with Jehu's name in sacred history. Of these two, the first is the destruction of the entire family of Ahab. Not until Jehu had reached the gates of Jezreel was alarm taken by the reigning family. Jehu first slew with his own hand the king of Israel, Jehoram; and then, while his followers pursued and killed the flying king of Judah, he himself carried out the prophet's sentence on Jezreel; and then there followed a work of extermination which, even at this distance of time, if we represent it to our imaginations, we read with a shudder. All the remaining relatives of Ahab in Jezreel, all the officers of the court, all the priests of the Tyrian Ashtarothe, were slaughtered. Seventy princes of the royal house were being educated in Samaria. Jehu warned their guardians of the danger of resisting him; and their heads were forthwith piled in two heaps on either side of the gate of Jezreel. Jehu proceeded to Samaria. On his way he met forty-two sons and nephews of the King of Judah, who, all unconscious of what had happened, were on their way to visit their relations in Jezreel. They were all forthwith put to the sword; and, when he had reached Samaria, Jehu's achievement was complete. The family of Ahab was, with the important exception of queen Athaliah, of Judah, for all practical purposes destroyed.

Jehu was on his way from Jezreel to Samaria, in order to carry out his second achievement, the destruction of the worship of Baal which had been imported from Phœnicia. This worship was really offered to the productive powers of nature personified as deity. It was thus a literal substitution of the creature for the Creator; and, in practice, it was attended by impurities that were all its own. Jehu would have had his own reasons for disliking it—one religious, one military, one political. As an Israelite, he viewed it as an alien and idolatrous creed. As a soldier, he knew that it enervated the manhood of the country. As a statesman, he connected it with the mischievous in-

fluence of the family of Ahab. But to overthrow the Baal-worship was no easy matter. It had the sympathies of the majority of the people. Some years before, only seven thousand in Israel had not bowed the knee to the famous image of Baal in Samaria. At this time Samaria was the centre of the Baal worship. In Samaria was the great temple which Ahab had built, and which was resorted to from all parts of the country; and, accordingly, it was at Samaria that Jehu determined to strike a decisive blow. Jehu was on his way to Samaria when he met the Arabian ascetic, Jehonadab, the son of Rechab. Jehonadab was already a public character, and Jehu, after ascertaining that he sympathised with himself, lifted him into his war-chariot, exclaiming, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord."

In the bloody scene that followed, Jehu acted with the same union of secrecy and decision that had marked his conduct in destroying the royal family of Ahab. He appeared in Samaria as an ardent patron of the popular worship. "Ahab," he said, "served Baal a little, but Jehu shall serve him much." He announced a public festival in which the worship of Baal was to be newly inaugurated. There were splendid vestments, costly sacrifices, a vast assembly which filled the great temple from end to end. King Jehu himself officiated. He offered the chief sacrifice to Baal, and the enthusiasm of the people was at its height. After ascertaining that no worshippers of the true God had mingled, from curiosity, in the great multitude, a signal was given to eighty armed men, and the entire congregation of idolators was put to the sword. The sanctuary of the temple was invaded by the soldiery; the great stone image of Baal was dragged out and destroyed; the wooden pillars dedicated to the inferior gods around were, one after another, burnt; and the shrine of the Phœnician divinity was deliberately devoted to public uses which effectually destroyed the idea of any sanctity whatever attaching to it. The worship of the Phœnician Baal in Israel never recovered from this crushing blow.

This was Jehu's zeal for the Lord which Jehonadab was to witness and did witness. Let us endeavour, if we may, to form a religious estimate of its worth.

What is zeal? It is conviction in a practical and working form. It is the business-like side of love, whether of God or of man. "Zeal," says Aquinas, speaking roughly—"zeal is the redoubled energy, love." Zeal, being an ardent love of God, is shown in desire to promote the love of God, the worship of God, the praise of God, the glory of God, wherever this is possible. But zeal also has an eye to everything that runs counter to God's will and to his glory. It rebukes vice; it combats error; it does all that it may to counteract and to remove the influences which are detrimental to the cause of God in the world at large and in the hearts of individual men. If we open the Bible we have not far to look in order to read the burning words of a true and pure zeal for God. Thus the psalmist whose words received in our Lord's time their highest fulfilment,—*"The zeal of thy house hath eaten me, and the rebukes of them that rebuke thee have fallen upon me."* In other words, *"The dishonours and the affronts which have been offered to thee I have felt to be, and have taken as, my own."* And again, *"My zeal hath even consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten thy words."* Or again, *"It grieveth me*

when I see the transgressors, because they keep not thy law." And thus Elijah on Horeb,—“I am very zealous for the Lord God of Hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken the covenant.” And thus our divine Lord,—“I am come to send a fire upon the earth ; and what will I but that it be already kindled ?” Or take up St. Paul’s Epistles. He is writing to the Philippians: “This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may recognize things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ’s coming, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which come by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” Or he is writing to the Thessalonians. “We might,” he says, “have been burdensome to you as the apostles of Christ, but we were gentle among you even as a nurse cherisheth her children ; so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.” Or to the Judaizing Galatians he exclaims, with passionate affection, “My little children of whom I travail again in birth until Christ be formed in you.” Or he protests to the Romans, in speaking of the rejection of Christianity by the mass of the Jews, “I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” And so St. James, when he is encouraging those who labour for souls,—“If any do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” These are but samples of the language of zeal which is to be found in the Bible. The circumstances under which it was uttered were widely different. The immediate objects in view were often as distinct as the distinctness of two revelations, or the lapse of a thousand years, could make them ; but under each revelation and in all time the spirit of zeal is the same, however its form may vary. We sometimes hear men speak as if zeal were only a Jewish virtue, and as if in christendom it had been replaced by some milder and, it must be confessed, less effective substitute, such, for instance, I suppose, as religious sentiment. But, as we have seen, the Bible gives no sort of countenance to a notion like this, and, indeed, it is utterly opposed to the reason of the case. If a very partial revelation, such as that of Sinai, in which God’s awful law was revealed without the alleviations of the great doctrines of redemption and grace, could yet stir the hearts of men to live as did the author of the 119th psalm, and to die as did the Maccabees, what ought not the gospel to achieve in which life and immortality are fairly and fully brought to light,—in which Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, incarnate, crucified, risen, ascended, interceding, forms a bridge between earth and heaven,—in which the heart of God is unveiled to the heart of man in the death of God’s sinless Son, and man is rendered capable of companionship with angels through the gift of a new nature which, “after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

Surely, when this glorious creed is believed, it must, at least at times, set the human heart on fire. It must produce missionaries, apostles, confessors, and martyrs. It must inspire men with a courage equal to the needs of a religion that only binds up the wounds of human nature on condition of telling it the truth, and that, in the last resort,

seeks nothing—nothing with entire fervour—but the smile of God, and fears nothing—nothing but his displeasure.

But, if zeal is not especially a Jewish virtue, the form which it took in Jehu's case was eminently Jewish. It expressed itself in a fearful destruction of human life. On this account some persons might be disposed to say that it was not zeal for the Lord at all. But they forget that God's work may take one form in one age or set of circumstances, and another in another,—that the moral standard of the Pentateuch is not inconsistent with, but is only lower than, that of the gospels,—that the acts of a good Jew, face to face with the enemies of his religion, must not be judged of by the standard which is present to the soul of a good Christian, since the Jew belongs to an earlier stage in the religious education of the world than the Christian. Our Lord warned his apostles against the temptation to propagate or to defend his kingdom by the sword; but the law of Moses punished idolatry with death, and Jehu was acting in obedience to the idea of duty to which he had been trained. There is nothing to be said on Christian grounds for such a massacre as that of St. Bartholomew in the name of the Lord, or for the brutalities which Cromwell practised on professedly religious grounds at Drogheda and at Wexford; but, when Jehu destroyed the Baal-worshippers in Samaria, the law of love had not yet been revealed in all its beauty, nor had men yet learnt that the Holy Spirit is a better guide into all truth than the weapons of carnal warfare.

Jehu's zeal, then, may have been a zeal for the Lord notwithstanding the slaughter to which it led; but what are we to say of the stratagem by which the slaughter of the Baal-worshippers was actually effected? Jehu compassed his purpose by affecting to patronize, where he meant to slay and to exterminate. How is this compatible, we may well ask, with any real anxiety to do high service to the God of truth? And here it is necessary to remember that the ruder and less informed conscience of mankind is always less careful about the choice of means than man's riper and more enlightened conscience. Jehu was satisfied that it was a duty, on religious grounds especially, to destroy the Baal-worshippers, who were numerous and powerful. As a soldier, Jehu would have thought everything fair in war, and he was, he thought, at war with the Baal worship and with all that it represented and implied. Jacob, in centuries before, had been right in seeking the birthright, though he was wrong in the means by which he sought it. Jael had been blessed for destroying Sisera, though not for abusing the duties of hospitality. A more instructed conscience than was Jehu's would have shrunk from proclaiming a festival for Baal with the object of destroying his worshippers. But Jehu's zeal for the Lord is not altogether impaired because he did not know that a rightful act must be carried out by rightful means in order to be well pleasing to God. We must, in justice, here distinguish between the absolute standard of right, and that relative standard which was present to the mind of Jehu; and, if we do this, we may well venture to think that this act, in itself, although impossible for us, and the means by which he achieved it, although still more impossible, were not for a man in his age and circumstances incompatible with a true zeal for the Lord.

But there are features in Jehu's zeal—two especially—which seem

to show that it can not have been so genuine and healthy as we could wish. It was spoiled, first of all, by ostentation. Jehu desired Jehonadab to come and see what he could do for the Lord. It has been suggested that Jehu's motive was of a different character—that, in asking Jehonadab to go with him, he was anxious to get the sanction of a personage who was widely respected, in an enterprise which could not but expose him to obloquy. But of this there is no evidence whatever. Jehu was a member of the sacred commonwealth of Israel, with its unique revelation, with its sacred law, with its authoritative and, as Jehu himself had good reason to know, active prophetic order. What need was there for applying for religious countenance and sanction to an Arab chief, however distinguished by high character or ascetic attainments? On the other hand, Jehonadab, with his nomad life and wide intercourse with men of all classes and minds, was just the kind of person whom, in a primitive age, a vain man would have endeavoured to interest in his own proceedings with a view to securing or enlarging their notoriety. Jehu's invitation to Jehonadab was equivalent to that of a man now-a-days who should write a paragraph on the subject of his own performances, and insert it in a newspaper. "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord," was certainly the language of ostentation; and ostentation, mark you, is fatal—fatal to the purity, if not to the force, of zeal. A man who is acting simply for God does not care to say more about his action than he can possibly help. A man whose ruling motive is a pure intention to serve God, so far as his knowledge of God's will may enable him, will be very careful not to drag it out on every occasion into the light of day, or, indeed, on any one occasion that he can rightly avoid doing so. A true and pure religious motive is like a delicate flower that will not bear exposure. To place it where all the world may sing its praises is to doom it to be scorched by the sun, or to be bitten by the frost. Its true, its safe home is in the recesses of the soul, where he sees and does justice to it, whatever it be, whose approval is alone really worth having. Jehu's zeal for the Lord became something else than pure zeal as soon as Jehonadab was asked to inspect and to admire it. It was zeal for the Lord, still, no doubt, but dashed by a zeal for Jehu's own credit and reputation. God's approval was still valuable, but so were the approval and admiration of Jehonadab. Oh, how much of our zeal is of this miserable mixed character; and what does he—must he—think about it who has a first and a unique claim on the energies of the soul?

And Jehu's zeal was spoiled, secondly, by inconsistency. And by "inconsistency" I mean, not the inconsistency of weakness which, certainly, there is no kind of reason for ever attributing to Jehu; but the inconsistency of want of principle. Baal-worship was not the only kind of idolatry that reared its head then in the land of Israel. There was the worship of the calves which had been instituted by Jeroboam from a political motive—that of providing a religious attraction to the ten separated tribes—an attraction powerful enough to prevent their attending the authorized worship of God in Jerusalem at the great festivals. This older idolatry was not less inconsistent with the honour and the will of God, than was the newer Baal or nature-worship that had been introduced more recently from Phœnicia; and a man whose highest motive in destroying the

Baal-worship had been zeal for God's honour would not have left this older and, in some respects, more actively mischievous form of error untouched. But we are told that "from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan," and, again, that "Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart, for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam" (that is from the established calf-worship) "which made Israel to sin."

Can we see a reason for this difference of Jehu's attitude towards the Baal-worship in Samaria and the calf-worship at Bethel? Surely we can. The Baal-worship was bound up with the dynasty of Ahab who had so largely patronized it. It thus had an influence politically hostile to Jehu, and he had reasons, as a statesman, for fearing and disliking it. But the calf-worship recalled a dynasty which had long disappeared, and therefore it excited no political apprehensions. On the contrary, there were political reasons for maintaining it which would have weighed with a man who was prepared to sacrifice his religion to his politics. It was useful to Jehu in maintaining the separateness of the kingdom of Israel against the religious attractions and claims of Judah; and Jehu was as anxious as any of his predecessors to do this, and comparatively indifferent to the idolatry and the schism which was upheld in doing it. Is Jehu quite singular in this? Has he no followers at the present day? Do we not sometimes witness a devotion to the cause of Christ and his gospel and his church, which goes to a certain point and is then mysteriously arrested, as if by an unseen hand; which achieves one form of goodness and shrinks from or disavows another; which stamps out one form of evil and tolerates or encourages another? The motive of the inconsistency may lie deep beneath the surface, but there it is; and it destroys the religious value of the little that is done. A true zeal for God does not draw arbitrary frontiers like this, to the range of its efforts. It stays not its hand till all that can be done is done—is done for him.

The moral which many persons have drawn from Jehu's career is that which was expressed in the epigram of the French statesman who, let us remember, was also an apostate bishop, "Above all things, no zeal!" Possibly Talleyrand may have meant, by "zeal," mere administrative fussiness, for he knew the practical worth of single-hearted devotion, at least in other men, to a political cause. But this is certain, that a religion which does not move zeal is already dead in the hearts of men. And zeal is not to be discredited by the false or imperfect samples of the virtue which may meet us in our experience of the world. If Jehu's zeal is open to criticism, we have nothing to say on this score against Elijah's; and Jehu's zeal, though spoilt by his vanity and by his inconsistency, was better—ininitely better—than sheer indifference. To try to do something for God, even by fits and starts—even amid the triumphant importunity of selfish motives, which are constantly daubing our little efforts with their earthly stains—is far, far better than to fold our hands and to do nothing for him, while secretly investing what is but the indolence of pure selfishness with the attributes of some fancied superiority to the petty activities of sectarian enterprise.

No, the lessons which Jehu's case does really teach us are most important. One is that great results are constantly achieved by God

through the means of very imperfect instruments. Jehu's work, stern as it was in the carrying out, was, in its results, a great work, though Jehu was not in the moral and religious sense by any means a great man. His work was done in spite of his being what he was. It was a greater thing to Israel and to the world for which it was achieved than it was to himself, the workman. So it has constantly been since. Great truths have been vindicated, great causes promoted, great reforms carried out, by men whose characters, upon close examination, prove to be very defective, indeed—to be impaired by ambition, by vanity, by unscrupulousness,—it may be, by worse faults than these. Never mind. The work is not their work, but God's. They are but instruments in his hands, just as are the elements of the natural world; and their short comings no more discredit the value of what has been carried out through their agency than the poverty of his materials is fatal to the character or to the performances of a great artist, who, indeed, shows his power in conquering his disadvantages, and in rendering with perfect fidelity upon the canvas, or into the marble, the ideas which have taken possession of his soul.

And Jehu teaches us, too, the risk of attempting to carry out public works, of a religious or moral character, on a small scale or a great, without some previous discipline of the heart and life. He had great public duties thrust upon him before he was ready for them in respect of personal self-discipline. How often is this the case, too, in our day. Men find themselves taking part in philanthropic or religious efforts, attending public meetings, perhaps making speeches, writing letters, articles, manifestoes, before they have learnt really to pray, or to keep their consciences, by God's grace, in moderate order, or to try to live by some sort of Christian rule. The consequence is that they, sooner or later, commit themselves. They compromise the very cause which they are anxious to maintain, or their earnestness seems to come to a sudden standstill. Then the world rubs its hands, and says that this is just what it always expected, and that gusts of enthusiasm do much more harm than good. The truth is that many a man in this position has, like Jehu, sincerely wished to do his little something for a good object, but he has begun at the wrong end. Public efforts for good cannot take the place of the care of the Christian workman's own soul.

“Thou, to wax fierce in the cause of the Lord,
To fret and to pierce with the heavenly sword—
Thou warmest and smitest, yet Christ must atone
For a soul that thou smitest—thine own.”

And, above all, let us be sure that a zeal for the Lord must be worthy of the name. It must not be at bottom, or even largely, a zeal for somebody or something else—a zeal for self. A pure intention to glorify God is the soul of the little useful work which any of us may be permitted to do in this short life. The absence of this steady purpose is a fatal flaw, even in careers which leave their mark upon nations and upon centuries, and which fire the imaginations of millions of men. The presence of this intention ennoble work on the very humblest scale, and associates it with the deeds of those who stand among the very foremost in the realms of light. Such zeal and energy as Jehu's is, beyond dispute, able to record itself in large characters on the page of history; but in the kingdom of souls it were better to be the poor widow who, all unperceived, as she thought, dropped her mite into the treasury, and won the blessing of the eternal Christ.

THE NEW COVENANT.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(Canon of St. Paul's,)

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER, 7, 1879.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which My covenant they break, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them saith the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."—JER. xxxi., 31—34.

Jerusalem had been taken by the Assyrian army, and the prophet Jeremiah, with a band of other captives, had been carried in chains to Ramah, where the Assyrian general, Nebuzar-adan, had fixed his head-quarters. In those dark hours, when the prophet was leaving a ruined home and was passing into the keeping of a pagan despot, all may well have seemed lost to a merely human forecast—the independence of Israel as a people—ay, and the prospect of Israel's religion, too. In those dark hours, God, who so often sets his bow in the cloud of some earthly sorrow, spoke to Jeremiah in visions which lit up his inward thoughts with the light which comes from another world. To this period of his life belong the 30th and 31st chapters of his book, and they contain a group of prophecies written down, we are told, by divine command, and all of them intended to relieve the darkness of the first days of captivity by the anticipation of better times beyond. The ultimate restoration of the people to their home in Palestine, the announcement of the second David, the picture of Rachel weeping over her tomb at Ramah for her captive descendants, and relieved by the sure promise of their deliverance, and, lastly, the great proclamation of the new covenant—these form a group of consolatory prophecies, each one of which is a perfect composition in itself,

while all are directed to promote a common object. And of these, the last, the prophecy which I have just read as my text, is the most important—the prophecy of the new covenant. I say, my brethren, it is the most important, for this prophecy is singled out to occupy a place of great prominence in the New Testament. When the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is engaged in showing that the old priesthood of the law was done away at Christ's coming, because Christ was the true priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec, whom the Old Testament itself had led men to expect, he enforces his argument by observing that the Jewish priesthood and the old covenant of God with Israel must stand or fall together as parts of one religious whole, and that, therefore, the Jewish priesthood must have been abolished because the old covenant to which it belonged was, according to the Jewish prophet, to give way to a new and a better covenant. And thus it is that the passage before us is lifted by the apostolic writings into a prominence which is altogether unique; and it will supply us, I trust, with some useful thoughts for advent, when Christians are thinking of the preparation which God made for Christianity before Christ came, and of what was said about it by the prophets who were inspired to prepare the world for the advent of the Redeemer and for those new relations between earth and heaven which he was to introduce.

Here, then, we observe, first of all, that the Christian religion is described as a new covenant. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant." This covenant would be new, for it had had predecessors. God is said to have made a covenant with Noah when he promised that a judgment like the flood should not be repeated; and with Abraham when he promised Canaan to his descendants for an everlasting possession, and imposed the condition of circumcision. But by the phrase "the old covenant" is meant especially the covenant which God made with Israel as a people when Moses descended from Mount Sinai. The writing termed the Book of the Covenant comprised the ten commandments, and the body of laws which are recorded in the 21st and two following chapters of the Book of Exodus. These were the conditions imposed by God, when he entered into covenant relations with Israel; and the solemn act by which this covenant was first inaugurated is described in the 24th chapter of Exodus. Gathered at the base of the holy mountain, before an altar resting on twelve pillars, in honour of the twelve tribes, the people waited, silent and awe-struck, while twelve delegates—for as yet there was no constituted priesthood—offered such sacrifices as yet were possible, and while the law-giver sprinkled the blood of the victims on the assembled multitude. That ceremony had a latent meaning, unperceived at the time, which many centuries afterwards was to be drawn out into the light, under apostolic direction. But the solemn character of the transaction was then and there profoundly felt, and at later periods of Israel's history this covenant was again and again renewed—as by Joshua, at Shechem, and by King Asa, at Jerusalem, and by Jehoiada, the priest, in the temple, and by the priesthood and people together, under Hezekiah, and under the auspices of Ezra and Nehemiah in later days still, after the great

captivity. It was renewed, because it was continually broken. It was a divine work, and yet, through man's perverseness, it was a continuous failure. And hence the words "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the days that I led them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord."

The "new covenant." It is a phrase which sounds somewhat strange to the ears of Christians, who have been accustomed all their life to talk of the "New Testament." A covenant is a compact or agreement, and it implies something like equal rights between those who are parties to it. Monarchs make covenants or treaties with monarchs,—nations with nations. One private person signs a deed of agreement with another. Laban made a covenant with Jacob, with a heap of stones to attest its reality in after times. The Gibeonites made a covenant with Israel: the men of Jabesh in their dire extremity proposed, but in vain, to make a covenant with Nahash the Ammonite king. In all such covenants a certain equality of relations between the contracting parties is assumed: each party acquires rights; each accepts liabilities. Even when, as sometimes happens, the government of a great power enters into contract with a house of business, or with an individual, this is because the firm or the person in question is, for the purpose of the contract, on terms of equality with the negotiating Government, as having at disposal some means of rendering it a signal service, which, for the moment, throws all other considerations into the background. And this general equality between parties to a covenant may be further illustrated by the case of the most sacred of all possible human contracts—the marriage tie—that marriage tie which, by the law of God, once made, can be dissolved only by death, and in which it is the glory of the Christian law—I do not speak of human legislation in Christian times—to have secured to the contracting parties equal rights. It is, then, a little startling to find this same word employed to describe a relation between the infinite and eternal God and the creature of his hand. He wants nothing, and he has everything to give. Man needs everything, and can do nothing that will increase a blessedness that is already infinite, or enhance a power which, as it is, knows no bounds. But here are covenants between God and man,—covenants in which there seems no place for reciprocity,—covenants in which indulgence or endowment is all on one side, and acknowledgment or, rather, failure, all on the other,—covenants in naming which language seems to forfeit its wonted meaning, and to betray us into misconceptions which bring, to say the least, bewilderment and confusion. And yet, in reality, when God speaks of making a covenant with man, he is only giving one more instance of that law of condescension of which the highest results appeared when he, the Infinite, took on him a human form,—when he, the Eternal, entered as a man into fellowship with the children of time. God covenanting with Abraham is a prelude to God lying as an infant in the manger of Bethlehem, or dying as a criminal on the cross of Calvary. Certainly, when he makes a covenant with his creatures,

he puts himself and them into a new position ; he makes the most of them ; he makes, if we dare to say it, the least of himself ; he gives promises and blessings of vast import ; he exacts some duty which he is pleased to treat as an equivalent. Abraham must practise and enforce circumcision : Israel must keep the law, the precepts of Sinia. Covenants are thus a part of the varied machinery of the divine condescension. By them God might seem to treat man as parents sometimes treat their children, placing them for some festive occasion in a position of supposed equality with themselves, investing them with attributes and with an importance which only belong to the years of manhood and to a position which, from the nature of the case, is entirely beyond their own. A covenant, then, is a contract, or compact, and the question cannot but occur to us how a covenant which God makes with his people should come to be called, as it is called, a testament ; for the words "covenant" and "testament" represent in our English Bibles a single word in each of the original languages, and this circumstance has been made the ground of attack upon the Bible, as if the sacred writers were playing tricks with words, or were employing an instrument of which they only half understood the value. Some of my hearers will understand what I mean in what I am going to say : and I must bespeak for a few minutes the charitable patience of the rest.

A testament, then, is a will. It has this in common with a covenant,—that it is a kind of settlement ; but it differs from a covenant or a contract in relation to our human concerns in that, while a covenant or contract is a transaction between the living, a will or testament connects the living with the intentions of the dead. Where a testament is, says the apostolic writer, "there must of necessity be the death of the testator, for a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." And yet the two words, "covenant" and "testament" are, as has been stated, used in our English Bible to translate a single word in the originals, which includes both meanings. And this two-fold rendering of a single word is not merely allowable : it is necessary. The Hebrew word originally means nothing more than a contract or covenant. A disposition of property made by a man in his lifetime, to have effect only after his death, was a proceeding foreign to the life of ancient Israel ; and there is no word in the old Hebrew language which will express it. But the Greek word which, in the New Testament, stands for the Hebrew word "covenant," means originally a testamentary disposition or will—a very familiar idea to the Greek world. The Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria, who, some two hundred years or more before our Lord, turned the Old Testament, bit by bit, from Hebrew into Greek as it was wanted for use in the services of their synagogues, and then made out of these fragments that great version which we to-day call the Septuagint, used the Greek word for "will" to translate the Hebrew word for "covenant," because they observed that the old covenants of God with the patriarchs and with Israel did involve actual bequests, such as was the possession of Canaan, which could only be inherited in a distant future. And thus the

Hebrew word meaning a contract was strained, if you please, by its actual use to mean a testament; and the Greek word meaning primarily, although not exclusively, a will, acquired by its associations the use of a covenant or contract. He who by his providence controls the course of human events and the currents of human thought does also, most assuredly, shape human speech so that it may do his work, and it is his doing, and not any chance irregularity, that the original word in the New Testament has thus come to mean both covenant and testament, for that which it was intended to describe answered to both meanings. Religion, as such, and the religion of the gospel especially, is at once a compact with God and a bequest from God. The gospel, I say, is a compact or covenant, because its blessings are conditionally bestowed. They must be met by faith, hope, love, repentance. And it is also a will or testament more obviously than was the Mosaic covenant, for it was made by our divine Lord when his death was in full view, and when he, who alone could use such words without folly or without blasphemy, took the cup into his blessed hands, and when, after he had given thanks, he gave it to his followers, saying, "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is being poured out for you and for many, for the remission of sins." And yet this very testament is so conditioned as to be a covenant, too, and the solemn words to which I have just referred were but an echo in an after age of the saying in the prophet, "Behold, I make a new covenant."

Of this new covenant in the gospel there were according to Jeremiah to be three characteristics. We cannot suppose that he is giving us an exhaustive description. He selects these three points because they form a vivid and easily understood contrast between the new covenant and the old,—between Christianity and Judaism.

First, then, in those who have a real part in the new covenant, the law of God was not to be simply or chiefly an outward rule; it was to be an inward principle. The ordinary Israelite thought of the divine law as of something outside him. True, he had to conform to do it, to submit to it, to obey it as he could; and, as St. Paul says, he made his boast in it, since he felt that it gave him national and religious prestige to belong to forefathers who had received it from heaven. But he shrank from its exacting requirements; he shrank from its stern warnings; he kept it in his imagination reverently, but at a distance. It was, as he rejoiced to proclaim, traced by the finger of God; but then it was laid up in the sacred ark, or in later ages it was hidden—so said the best traditions—in some mysterious cave, ever since the Chaldean capture of the Temple. The Jew was proud of it as the chief glory of a religion whose requirements he scarcely attempted to fulfil. Of course, there were exceptions in ancient Israel, such as that most spiritual of the later poets who, in the dark night of the captivity poured forth from his fervid soul the 119th Psalm—one long celebration of the beauty and power of the divine law as manifested in the life and as ruling the affections of a sincere Israelite. But, as a rule, the law was prized and disobeyed—disobeyed like some

great family name which is valued as a social passport, while its attendant obligations to lead a noble life are generally disregarded. With the new covenant it was to be otherwise. "This is the covenant which I will make in those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it upon their hearts." The law was to be no longer an outward rule condemning the inward life, or even rousing the spirit of rebellion: it was to be an inward principle, not running counter to the will, but shaping it, and claiming obedience, not from fear but from love,—ay, from love heightened to enthusiasm. In the Christian's thoughts, as St. Paul says, it was to be written, not on tables of stone, but on the fleshly tables of the heart. It was to present itself, not as a summons from without the soul, but as an impulse from within the soul; not as declaring that which had to be done or to be foregone, but as describing that which it was already a joy to forego or to do. In short a new power, the spirit of Jesus Christ, giving Christians a new nature—the nature of Jesus Christ—would be within the soul and would effect the change. What the law of Moses could not do in that it was weak through the weakness of human nature, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful human nature, and for human nature, condemned sin in human nature, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the law of human nature, but after the Spirit. The language of the 119th Psalm should be that of every Christian who has a true inward share in the new covenant,—“The law of thy mouth is dearer unto me than thousands of gold and silver: thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. Lord, what love have I unto thy law! All the day long is my study in it.”

And a second token of a part in the new covenant is the growth of the soul in the knowledge of divine truth. In ancient Israel, as now, men learned what they could about God from human teachers, but the truths which they learned, though inculcated with great industry, were, in the majority of cases, not really mastered, because there was no accompanying process of interpretation and adjustment from within. It was to be otherwise in the future. “And they shall no more teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.” In the new covenant, the divine teacher, without dispensing with such human instruments as were needed, would do the most important part of the work himself. He would make truth plain to the soul, and would enamour the soul of the beauty of truth by such instruction as is beyond the reach of human argument and human language, since it belongs altogether to the world of spirit. “Ye have an unction from the Holy One,” and St. John to his readers, “and ye know all things.” “Listen not,” cries St. Augustine, “too eagerly to the outward words: the true Master sits within.”

And this explains a fact which has been frequently observed, namely, how often the apprehension of religious truth is found to be out of all proportion to the natural abilities or cultivation or acquirements of persons who really apprehend it. Not seldom do the very

poor who can hardly read at all, but who have made the most of such Christian instruction as God has placed in their way, show by some stray observation how high and how deep their thoughts do really reach about divine things,—how eminent is their position in that invisible school of Christ in which precedence is assigned not to natural acuteness, but to spiritual illumination,—how little the unseen teacher is dependent upon circumstances on which we men in our ignorance set so much store, in order to perfect his work.

And a third characteristic of the new covenant was to be the forgiveness of sins. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." This, although it is stated last, is really a precedent condition of the other two. While sins are unforgiven there can be no writing of the moral law upon the heart of man, and no illumination of the soul of man in the secrets of divine truth, for these prerogatives imply that the soul is inhabited by a divine tenant,—that Christ, the hope of glory, is in Christians, because his Spirit has made and still keeps open a home for him in the will and the intellect of the regenerate soul. But this transcendent privilege is the very wildest of baseless dreams, if, indeed, it be the case that the sins of the past are unforgiven. And in the average Jew they were unforgiven. The sacrifices of atonement under the Jewish law provided some legal or external pardon: they could not put away moral guilt. It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should put away sin. They were shadows of a real atonement to be offered once for all by the perfect representative of our race. His death was to be the highest expression of a perfectly obedient will. His blood was the symbol of his death, and, as instinct with his life, was to have a propitiatory virtue to the end of time. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even forgiveness of sins"—this is the motto which Christian faith traces above the crucified, since all the avenues of pardon here below—the one baptism for the remission of sins, the "power and commandment given to God's ministers to declare and to pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins," the pardoning virtue of sorrow, pressed to the heart by faith and love, the humbling, trembling hope whispered within that all has at last been blotted out—these draw their power altogether from the great sacrifice on Calvary. "This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" and this salvation of his would begin with pardon; and this pardon in its plenary completeness is the crowning triumph of the new covenant between God and man.

Here, then, we seem to have already marked out for us some considerations which may be turned to practical account this advent. What is our share individually in the blessings of the new covenant? Are we conscious that we do, in any true sense, love the law of God, because it is his law, and that amid weakness we obey it, because obedience is welcome to us—because disobedience would be painful? Or is our Christian rule of life like the Israelites' law of old, written, so far as we are concerned, only in our Bibles and our Prayer-books, but not incorporated with the substance of our soul's life? Can we trace, as time goes on, any progressive growth in

the knowledge of God—of his attributes of power, of wisdom, of love—of his revealed will—of his relations with ourselves—of his inconceivable tenderness and condescension in redemption and in grace? Or is it the case with us that, while our understandings have been growing in strength and in capacity in all other directions and for all other purposes, our knowledge of the infinite and eternal Being is just what it was ten or twenty or thirty-years ago, if indeed it be not something less, because no inward teacher has been welcomed by us to graft on our hearts the truths which have fallen on our outward ear? Are we rejoicing in the sense of God's pardoning love, in Jesus Christ, extended to us, though most unworthy, not only in baptism, but also again and again for many later transgressions of the divine law? Or have we not yet learned what true repentance means—repentance without which pardon is for ever impossible? By these questions we may test the reality of our share in the new covenant. And here, perhaps, brethren, some who hear me will say to themselves that they like to think of themselves as living under the New Testament, and that they conceive of the New Testament as containing a legacy of unstinted benevolence to which no conditions whatever are attached. Doubtless the gospel, a testament or will, does ensure to successive generations of Christians a splendid patrimony. Under its terms we inherit the infinite merits of the Redeemer, the sanctifying power of the Spirit, the grace and virtue of the sacraments, the instruction and encouragement of the Holy Scriptures, ay, and a right of access at all times "into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus through a new and living way which he has consecrated," and which is open to faith while time shall last. Doubtless the gospel is a will, and we Christians are the legatees in whose favour it is drawn; but it is also a will to which conditions are attached—such conditions as practically to make it a contract and a covenant. Do not let us—oh, do not let us for the world—deceive ourselves! Those exhilarating promises of a law written on the heart, of the communication of truth by an invisible teacher, of the plenary forgiveness of all our sins, imply accompanying engagements and duties. They imply faith, hope, love; they imply a straightforward desire to make the best of religious opportunities; they imply renunciation of our spiritual enemies, belief in the articles of the Christian faith, obedience to God's holy will and commandments—the three terms of the great engagement which was promised and vowed in our separate names when we first entered into covenant with Christ. We cannot do ill in sifting this matter, each for himself, this advent. Religion, it has been finely said, rests on a sense of gratitude balanced by a sense of enduring responsibility. By all means let us hail in the New Testament mercies which should stir our undying gratitude; but let us not forget that the New Testament is also the new covenant, and that we do well to think what that title involves in respect of our responsibility, "and so much the more as we see the day approaching."

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS
AND
GOD THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS.

Two Sermons

BY THE

REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(Canon of St. Paul's,)

PREACHED IN

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

On Sunday afternoons, December, 21st & 28th, 1879.

London :

F. DAVIS, (late J. PAUL), Penny Pulpit Office, Chapter House Court,
St. Paul's, E.C.

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.

A Sermon

Preached on Sunday Afternoon, December 21st, 1879.

“Thomas said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.”—John xx. 25.

If there is one characteristic more than another by which the Bible account of the great servants of God differs from most biographies of good men in modern times, it is the fearless truthfulness with which the Bible describes the failings of its heroes. Generally speaking, a modern biographer is afraid to be perfectly explicit when he has to notice some less favourable side of a life, or character on which he is engaged. He says to himself that his first duty is to be loyal to his subject, and that he can not afford to play with topics which would imperil the feeling of respect or admiration which it is his object to produce. He leaves it to the critics to pick holes in the man whom he is describing, and so he touches weaknesses or faults with a gentle and a sparing hand, and throws all his strength into the description of what is plainly excellent and admirable. Too possibly, in the event, he defeats his real purpose after all, and men say that they came wanting to have a history, and have been put off with a panegyric. But with the Bible it is otherwise. The Bible enumerates with a dry simplicity the failings, no less than the virtues, of the saints—the falsehood of the patriarch, Jacob—the murder and adultery of David, the man after God’s own heart—the cowardice and temporary apostasy of St. Peter—even the impatience, as it would seem, at least on one occasion, of our Lord’s own blessed mother. These are described in the sacred text without emphasis, but also without shrinking when they have to take their place in the order of the narrative. One only life is there in the whole of scripture in which no trace of imperfection is really discoverable—his life who, though he was “made sin for us,” yet “knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” As scripture guides us Christians

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.

to adore the sinless manhood of the divine Redeemer, it puts into our mouths, generation after generation, the confession in which we all of us without exception must join,—“All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And thus it is that in to-day’s gospel the great apostle St. Thomas, who now reigns with Jesus Christ our Lord in glory, comes before us as illustrating, not a virtue, but a grave failure, and on an occasion of critical importance. That the doubt of St. Thomas was overruled, as the church says in the collect, to “the more confirmation of the faith” does not affect its intrinsic character. And St. Thomas to-day is only our example, not as the apostolic doubter, but as the apostle who shows us how faith may be reinvigorated—how doubt may be surmounted or dispelled.

And thus, indeed, in the church’s year this apostle’s festival fitly guards the approach to Christmas, since, at the cradle of the divine child of Bethlehem, faith must learn, as did St. Thomas in the upper chamber, to confess the divinity which is veiled beneath a human form, and to exclaim from the heart when it contemplates the Saviour in his infancy, as in his risen glory, “My Lord and my God.” St. Thomas, you will remember, was not with the ten apostles on the evening of the day of the resurrection when Jesus appeared in their midst and blessed them and showed them His hands and His side. And when they told Thomas what had happened, he refused to believe unless he, too, could himself test the reality of that which they reported. “Except I shall see in Christ’s hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

And here it may be asked, first of all, what is there to object to in this declaration? Is not this, it may be said, the language of a man who is anxious to ground his most serious convictions on a solid foundation—who in a matter of such urgency will not be content with second-hand information, but insist upon personal investigation of, and contact with, the fact on which his faith is to rest? May it not be argued that by a singular anticipation Thomas has here caught something of the positive spirit of the modern world—that he is anxious, above all things, to escape illusions and to arrive at truth by experimental methods—that truth is sometimes obliged to be peremptory and exacting if she is to be equal to herself, and that the fingers of Thomas thrust not irreverently into the wounds of the risen Christ are the fitting symbol of the spirit of enquiry, which is not, therefore, irreligious, because it is the sworn enemy of all the forms of easy credulity? This is what may be said, and the answer is as follows.

The declaration of Thomas that he will not believe except he can have bodily contact with the wounds which show that the Christ who is risen is the very Christ who was crucified involves an unwarrantable demand upon the providence of God. Why is a man

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.

to refuse to believe a truth which he has, mark you, already good reasons for thinking highly probable, and which comes to him attested by persons whom he is bound in reason and charity to trust, unless he can have it warranted by another and a distinct form of proof? Thomas does not say that he cannot believe if he does not touch the wounds of Christ: he says that he shall or will not. He betrays, by the very form of his words, his consciousness of the truth that his believing or not is, to a certain extent, at any rate, in his own power, and that he is thus making a sort of bargain with God, and is asking for better terms than he has before him. God, he thinks, might have done more for him if he was to believe in the resurrection of Christ; and until he is satisfied he means to withhold belief. He sees, as he thinks, how much better the matter might have been ordered, just as Naaman thought that Abana and Pharpar would wash him from his leprosy better than all the waters of Israel,—just as the rich man in hell thought that if one from the dead went to his brethren they would really repent. And he who prescribed the Jordan to the Syrian leper for the cure of his leprosy, and the teaching of Moses and the prophets to the brethren of Dives as furnishing sufficient incentives to repentance—he also ordered, by his providence, that Thomas should hear of Christ's resurrection from apostles who had seen the risen Christ, instead of seeing him with them. Not to accept the report of the apostles as sufficient was to challenge the wisdom of a divine appointment; and for this reason, if for no other, the unbelief of St. Thomas is implicitly censured by our Lord. It may be argued that the causes which determine conviction are not in a man's own power,—that they belong to the world of intellectual truth, and could not be other than they are. And it may be further urged that the evidence of sight is better, any day, than the evidence of heresay, and that Thomas was right in saying that, if he was to believe in his Master's resurrection, he must not merely hear that Christ had risen; he must see him with his eyes, and feel him with his hands.

Here, it is plain, we are very nearly on the ground which was taken up by Hume in that celebrated argument against miracles which was so much discussed by our grandfathers at the close of the last and the beginning of the present centuries. Hume maintained that belief is founded upon and regulated by experience, and that, while we often experience testimony to be false, we never witness a departure from the order of nature. Therefore, Hume argues, it is more in accordance with experience that men should deceive us when they report a miracle than that nature should be irregular; and there is, accordingly, a balance of presumption against miracles so strong as to outweigh the strongest testimony in their favor. This argument is even now, from time to time, reproduced with unimportant variations; and it may detain us for a few minutes, both as lying in the path of our subject, and as having an intrinsic importance besides.

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.

Hume affirms that the credibility of a fact or a statement must be decided by its accordance with the established order of nature, and by this standard only. This would be true enough if there were certainly known to be no being in existence above and beyond nature—if nature really included all existing powers and beings. But if there is a being in existence higher than what we call nature, and indeed its author, of whose mind and character we have independent knowledge, then occurrences which, like miracles, are out of agreement with the order of nature may yet be credible if they can be shown to agree with the known attributes and purpose of this being. An event, whether it be natural or miraculous, at once becomes credible when a sufficient reason is assigned for it; and sufficient reason is assigned for a miracle when it is shown to be in harmony with the character and purpose of the Being who has created what we call nature, even though it should involve an innovation upon his usual methods of working—in other words, upon nature itself. For to those who believe in the existence of God—and Hume himself was a serious theist—the idea of an order of nature ought not, in reason, to be considered sufficient to destroy the antecedent possibility of miracle, much less to overrule trustworthy testimony that a miracle has actually been worked.

And, secondly, Hume's argument proves too much for his purpose. If the strongest testimony to a miracle ought to be rejected because human testimony has sometimes deceived us, while we have never observed a failure in the order of nature, then the testimony of our senses to a miracle ought also to be rejected, because our senses, too, have, as we cannot deny, at least, sometimes, deceived us. In other words, we ought not to believe a miracle if we saw it worked before our own eyes. If the order of nature, as it is called, forbids us to trust the report of an honest eye-witness about a miracle, it may forbid us to trust the report of our own eyes; but then if we cannot trust the witness of our senses about a miracle, how do we know anything really about the invariability of the order of nature itself? This very idea of a settled order of nature is itself the product of a continuous exercise of the senses of many generations of men; and if the senses are to be credited when they report an order which is the rule of nature, they do not deserve less credit when they report the miraculous exception. Though they may at times give us false report, it is upon the whole, we are well assured, reasonable to believe them, and, in like manner, though the testimony of other men may be sometimes false, it may also be, at least, as trustworthy as the evidence of our own senses. Whether it is so, or not, in a given case must be held to depend upon the moral character of the witness—upon his opportunities of observation and of apprehending and describing clearly what he sees. If he tells us that he has seen a miracle, and if his character and conduct are in keeping with the requirements of the statement, then his testimony proves, at any rate, to begin with, the conviction of his own mind; and this con-

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.

viction is itself a fact which must be explained in some way or other ; and if it can be accounted for in no other way than by supposing that the alleged miracle was real, then it is not merely reasonable—it is strictly necessary in reason—to believe the miracle upon testimony, the claims of the order of nature notwithstanding.

And this brings us to St. Thomas protesting to the disciples who had seen Jesus risen that he would not believe the resurrection till he had seen and touched the risen Redeemer. Why should he refuse credence to the report of his colleagues? St. Thomas certainly would not have held that there was any order of nature which could bar the possibility of miracle, since he believed in an omnipotent and living God, and would not have shrunk, like the deists of the last century, from what is involved in this belief; but he would not believe the startling report that his crucified Master had left his grave. He refused to believe it, not because the resurrection was a momentous miracle, but because he could not take it from others upon trust. And yet there were not wanting grave reasons for his believing the ten apostles, the two disciples, and the three women who said that they had seen the Lord. Had not Christ said that he would rise from the dead? Had he not appealed to the old Jewish scriptures, and given his resurrection as a sign of the truth of his mission? If a miracle was ever to be looked for, was it not to be expected here? If God who had made the order of nature so generally invariable might be expected to interfere with it for the highest of all purposes that we can conceive, this surely was an occasion for his doing so. Had Thomas enjoyed those months—those years—of high companionship with Jesus without perceiving in him that which, to say the very least, might well warrant interference on his behalf, and on behalf of his cause and work, with the accustomed laws of God in nature; and was it reasonable or reverent to reject the assurance of his brethren that such an interference had taken place?

It may, indeed, be asked why Thomas should not have been permitted to see Jesus Christ after his resurrection as the other apostles saw him. Had he done so, no question would have been raised—no hesitation experienced. And, in like manner, men ask why the evidence for Christianity is not greater than it is—is not, as some would wish to put it, so strong, so compulsory, that the mind could not set it aside without conscious absurdity. The truth is, that the evidence for religion is just what it is, and no more, in order to satisfy reason, rightly informed and disciplined, and yet to leave room for faith. If we could not help believing in Christianity, there would be no room for faith. We should accept the creed, in that case, by exactly the same mental act as that by which we accept the conclusion of a problem in Euclid. As reasonable beings, we should have no choice about it, and our act would imply nothing whatever as to the condition of our affections or our wills. God has made the evidence of Christianity less than mathematical because he willed to

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.

make faith a test, not merely or chiefly of the goodness of our understandings, but also of the condition of our hearts and wills. These do contribute to the complex act of faith, while they have nothing to do with the pure action of reason. "With the heart," says the apostle, "man believeth unto righteousness;" and because faith is thus a criterion of the state of our affections, and of the direction and straightforwardness of our wills, it is represented in the New Testament as a cause of our justification before God. It could not be this if it were a mere act of the understanding; and, because it is much more than an act of the understanding, the evidence for Christianity is so adjusted as to leave room for the play of those other elements which enter into it.

But if the unbelief of St. Thomas is instructive, his recovery of faith is still more instructive. When Thomas laid down conditions under which alone belief in his risen Lord would be possible, our Lord, in his astonishing love and condescension, was pleased to take the apostle at his word. A week after the day of the resurrection, Jesus appeared among the assembled apostles, when Thomas was with them. Thomas had said, "I will not believe;" and now he saw. He saw that form, those features, on which he had gazed in bygone times with such reverent love. He heard that voice with whose accents he was so familiar, and which he had for the moment deemed to be silent for ever in the grave. And he was thrilled—we may be sure of it—through and through. To have seen his risen Master at all would have been of itself overwhelming. To have seen him after denying that he was risen—after resisting the witness of others to his having kept his word—this must have passed all word and thought. And when, instead of reproaching him, Jesus accepted his terms, and bade him "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing," what an agony of confusion and self-reproach must not have taken possession of the apostles's soul! Thomas—he might have resisted, even yet. Conviction was not forced upon him. Had his will been set on resistance, there were ingenious reasons for resisting close at hand. But, in truth, the sight of Jesus was enough. He had no heart to hold out against the presence—against the appeal of the most merciful. So far as we are told, he did not reach out his fingers towards the hands and the side of Christ, but as there was now no room for faith, properly speaking, in the resurrection, since the risen Jesus was there an object of sight, his faith fixed on the divine person that was veiled beneath the human form before him, and he cried in a transport of adoration, "My Lord and my God."

We may have known men who in Thomas's place would have acted otherwise; for a return to faith is often rendered difficult, if not impossible, by a subtle form of pride—not the coarse self-assertion which outrages good taste, if it does not shock the moral sense, but the quiet vice which mimics a healthy self-respect and which

actually led the Jews or, most of them, to reject Jesus Christ. This is the foe of reviving faith, for such pride aims commonly at two results—personal distinction, and freedom from public criticism. A believer, as such, can hardly be very distinguished. His faith places him on a level with millions who share it—with poor simple folk who make no pretence to being wiser than their neighbours,—still less, wiser than the Bible or wiser than the church ; but an unbeliever may imagine himself—I do not here say with what degree of justice—to see a great deal farther than the mass of people around him. He piques himself on being superior to their prejudices, and of living habitually in higher spheres of thought ; and, therefore, when Christianity, as God's message to the human race, visibly commends itself to, and takes possession of, multitudes of men, that of itself is a reason with him for rejecting it. And if he has already rejected it, this reason becomes very strong indeed, for the conceit of singularity, so to term it, is reinforced by the pride of consistency. If he returns to faith, he reflects that he will have to admit to himself and to others that he was wrong in supposing himself more far-sighted than others, and this admission will cost him too much. Thomas certainly had to own to himself that his demand to see and touch the wounds of Christ, was, in itself, unwarrantable ; but in that sacred presence there was no room for self. He surrendered at discretion. And much more do grosser vices hold back the soul from a return to faith. A man who is yielding to them willingly can not afford to treat the evidence for Christianity with intellectual justice. The gospel reproves and condemns him. It dashes his cup of pleasure with bitterness. He knows that he has no part in its promises. He cannot mistake the import of its warnings, so far as he is concerned. He has, therefore a strong motive for wishing it to be untrue ; and in these matters the will generally contrives to make the understanding do its good pleasure, so that infidel reasoning which affects to be a disinterested effort of the pure intelligence, is sometimes—I am far from saying always—is sometimes prompted and dictated by some lower form of desire. Besides this, vicious habits blunt the spiritual perceptions of the soul. They eat out its finer sensibilities. They are fatal to its capacity for detecting moral beauty ; and this puts one of the most striking Christian evidences—that which is based on the consummate perfections of our Lord's human character—at once out of reach ; and thus men have come to regard the most tender and attractive mysteries of the Christian creed with something even approaching to disgust, and they catch eagerly at misrepresentations of its import, and they welcome with both hands objections to the reasoning by which it is defended, and they busily repeat jests at its expense. Into such a soul, we are told, wisdom will not enter, nor dwell in a body that is subject to sin. No such condition would have deterred St. Thomas, but it is far too common not to be noticed here.

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.

There are, of course, other causes which may keep men from faith—causes for which God, we may trust, confidently, in his justice and in his mercy, will make due allowance. Such are an unhappy education, perhaps, by unbelieving parents or guardians, or intimacy in after life with unbelievers of great mental ability, or a constitutional frivolity of judgment, and, not unfrequently—though this is little suspected—not unfrequently a morbidly active imagination which can not acquiesce in the idea of fixed and unalterable truth. Not least among these causes, too, is unconscious ignorance. Men who reject Christianity are often ignorant of what the case for Christianity really is. They have been familiar with the Christian language—with the language of the Bible, it may be—for years, and they mistake this familiarity with the text for real knowledge. They do not reflect upon it. They do not see its harmonies—its ample moral self-justification—its depths beyond depths of inter-connected truth. Living, as they do, upon the surface, they are impressed by the apparent difficulties which hang about it, and they ask to put their hands into the print of the nails, if they are to receive it. He who stood before the eyes of Thomas waits by his grace to appear in the centre of their souls; but whether they will adore him if he does is the anxious question. Doubt of the truth of Christianity is more common than it was five-and-twenty years ago; and there are writers and speakers who would fain persuade themselves and others that, far from being a misfortune, such doubt is a healthy and interesting condition of mind. We often hear quoted those lines of the laureate,

“There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.”

Doubt is treated as a symptom of intellectual activity, while faith is assumed to mean stagnation of mind. Doubt is described as mental life,—faith almost as mental death,—doubt as the herald of progress,—faith as the symptom of unenquiring adherence to the errors of the past. No, brethren, this is not the language of whatever is best and most thoughtful among us. In the early years of manhood, when spirits are buoyant and health is unimpaired,—when, as yet, no dark shadow has fallen across the path of life, and the sun shines so brightly that it seems as if it might shine on for ever, it is possible to sing in these lyrical strains the apotheosis of doubt. But pass a few years of life till the first great gap has been made by death in the home circle, and the first great heartache has settled on the soul,—till some sharp shock of illness has laid bare the frailty of the tenure by which we hold to life, and has opened out before the mind's eye the depths beyond depths of that eternity which stretches away beyond the tomb; and ask yourselves then whether it is better that the hand which lays hold on the unseen—on the promises of the eternal God, on the work of the crucified Saviour, on the grace of his Spirit and of his sacraments—should quiver, should tremble, than

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.

that it should grasp its object with a firm and masterful and unyielding hold. No, brethren, doubt is not health: it is disease. Doubt is not strength: it is weakness. It is moral weakness, and it is religious weakness,—moral weakness because it shivers or paralyzes those great convictions which impel man to act virtuously, and which sustain him during the stress and pain of action. No man acts upon a motive which one half of his mind accepts, while the other questions or rejects it. As St. James says, a man with two souls, or minds, is unstable in all his ways. He can not make up his mind: he has, in truth, no one mind to make up; and, while he is balancing helplessly between the conflicting views which in their equipoise produce the doubt, the time for decisive action has already passed and nothing has been done.

Doubt, then, is moral weakness. Much more, it is religious weakness. Religion is only possible when the soul lays hold upon one on whom it depends and to whom it is and feels itself to be bound by the double tie of love and submission. But when the soul's grasp of the perfect Being is weakened, loosened, if not forfeited, by doubt, then religion correspondingly dies away, and the soul sinks down from the high contemplation of that which is above it into those thick folds of material nature which await its fall, and which, when it has fallen, complete its degradation. Faith, believe me, is the leverage of our nature. Doubt shatters the lever. Do not let us waste compliments upon what is, after all, a disease and weakness of our mental constitution, like those savages, forsooth, who make a fetish of the animals or the reptiles from whose ravages they suffer. Let us resist; let us conquer it; and if we quote those lines of the laureate already referred to, and which, to speak the truth, are perhaps not altogether without a touch of paradox, let us remember that his friend and hero, if he passed through the pain of doubt, yet fought his doubts and gathered strength.

“He would not make his judgment blind,
But faced the spectres of the mind,
And laid them. Thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own.”

As you leave this cathedral, you will see, or you would have seen in the north-west chapel, if the light had sufficed, a painted window which represents the subject of to-day—the incredulity of St. Thomas. That window has been erected within the last year to the memory of the late Dean of St. Paul's, Dr. Mansel; and, as it has seemed to me, Dean Mansel claims a special place in the thoughts and prayers of those who knelt beside him of old in this, his cathedral, on St. Thomas's day. Each of us, my brethren, has his appointed work in life, and in the church of God; and the achievement by which Dean Mansel is best known to the educated world is his application of the principles of the so termed “philosophy of the

unconditioned" to the solution of some difficulties supposed to lie against the claims of revelation. That particular enterprise, brilliant as it was, roused at the time a storm of controversy, and the discussions to which it gave rise have not yet quite died away; nor, indeed, considering the enduring interest of the subject for serious thinkers, are they likely to do so. But his greatest work was wider far than this; and we may dare to say that it was of more certain and more absolute value. No man, probably, in this generation, had explored more perfectly the capacities of the human mind, considered as a reasoning instrument, than had Dean Mansel. No man, certainly, knew better how to turn it to account, for, as we still read him, there is a combination of strength and delicacy in his method of handling an argument which marks him as one of the princes of the world of thought. And yet the truth which he felt most keenly, and which he laboured in a hundred ways to impress on those around him, was the truth of the very limited range of our mental powers when dealing with the vast subjects that surround us—with the heights and depths, the immeasurable and eternal things, which form the subject matter of religion. He had no patience as a reasoner with the preposterous demands for unattainable kinds of proof in these awful regions, or with the puny and self-confident logic which essays to scale—almost to storm—the very throne of Christ, only because it has not yet discovered the measure of its prowess; and for himself he could enter the courts of the kingdom of heaven, because he had learnt that the temper of a little child was not less dictated by the highest reason than by the truest religious sense. Eight years and a half have passed since he was laid in his grave—since he entered into that life where nothing is left for faith to do, where souls gaze incessantly on faith's everlasting object, and where, one by one, each of us in his turn, we shall follow him; and, perhaps, in that distant and endless world, some of us will thank him beneath the throne of Christ for showing us, in this our earthly pilgrimage, that they who have not seen and yet have believed have learnt what is due to a true estimate of the powers of human reason as well as to the authority of the voice of God.

GOD THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS.

A Sermon

Preached on Sunday Afternoon, December 28th, 1879.

“All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”—
1 Chron. xxix. 14.

This was King David's confession in the hymn of praise which he offered not long before his death, when the chief of the fathers, and the princes of the tribes of Israel had, at his instance, offered of their wealth towards the temple which Solomon was to build. David himself set the example. He gave with princely munificence, or, as he himself says, with all his might, for he remembered that the work was great, and the palace was not for man but for the Lord God; and when he had thus done what he could, he could, he knew, appeal with a clear conscience, and with an unfaltering voice, to his subjects; and they in their turn, and according to their measure, were equal to the occasion. They gave gold, silver, brass, iron, in abundance, and all who had precious stones in their keeping gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord. There was, in fact, as it seemed, an enthusiasm abroad for making personal sacrifices—a contagious rapture which had spread from the monarch among his subjects, and had taken possession of all hearts and wills, and men were tasting the exquisite moral delight which is inseparable from a real act of sacrifice when it is made for an object of which the judgment unreservedly approves. “The people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly unto the Lord, and David the king also rejoiced with great joy;” and in his joy, David, as was his wont in all strong movements of thought and feeling, betook himself to God—poured out the grand hymn of which the leading thought is expressed in the words “All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”

Now these words plainly express a truth which rises high above the occasion to which they immediately refer. All the blessings of this life, they tell us, are God's gifts; and here is a motive for generous gifts, namely, that, give God what we may, it is already his own. “All things come of thee.”

GOD THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS.

Here is the religious estimate of the world and of lives,—the estimate which is formed wherever religion, properly speaking, exists at all. From the religious point of view, no other idea of the relation between the world and God is possible. There is no room for religion if the universe is conceived of as existing somehow without the agency of God, or if God is conceived of as being identified with, and as practically buried beneath, the folds of his own universe. It is only with God the maker of all things, visible and invisible—with God as utterly distinct in his uncreated and eternal essence from the work of his hands—that the human soul can enter into that bond of dependence and service which we call religion. Day by day, in his inmost heart, a religious man looks up: away from himself, away from the creatures around him, he looks up to the one self-existent being whose power and wisdom and goodness know no bounds—who ever has been—who ever will be—what he is now; and he exclaims “All things come of thee.” Of God it comes that anything besides God exists at all. God was free to create or to live on, as he had lived on for an eternity, unsurrounded by creatures. Of God it comes that whatsoever exists exists as it exists, and not in some other mode or manner of existence. God was not obliged by any constraining necessity to create this particular universe in which we live, and these actual creatures which inhabit it in the forms, numbers, kinds, varieties, which we see around us. No independent agency could force his hand and make him obey its behests. No pre-existing or rather co-existing material imposed upon his activity conditions of working which he could not but obey. Of him it comes that in this marvellous universe that which is most like himself as a spiritual essence takes precedence of that which is less like, so that matter is subordinated to spirit—so that the physical world exists for the sake of the moral—so that man is invested with dominion over the works of God’s hands, and all things are put in subjection under his feet. All things come of him—their existence and the modes and the purpose of their existence; and whether he fashions his handiwork at a single stroke, or slowly brings it to perfection through the measured movements of almost incalculable periods of time, it is always he who furnishes the material—he who gives the impact—he who presides with an absolute control at each stage of the prolonged development—he who supplies the last touch of strength or beauty to the highest or the fairest in earth or heaven, “All things come of thee.”

But this, the only possible religious estimate of the relation between the universe and God, is not morally fruitful for you and me—does not issue in anything practical, until we work it out in detail. And if, my brethren, this detail is somewhat commonplace, it cannot be helped. It shares this quality, after all, with the highest truths which are not, if commonplace, less likely on that account to be disregarded. “All things come of thee.”

This is true, first of all, of that which was in David’s mind—of material possessions—of property. Property is both originally, and

GOD THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS.

as long as we hold it, the gift of God. We speak of a man's making his fortune; and no doubt industrious habits, attention to the wants and tastes of the times and to the conditions under which they can be easily satisfied, prudence, caution, and the like, are qualities which do largely contribute towards success of this kind. I say they contribute to it: they cannot command it. In every prosperous life there is an element which defies calculation, an element of unlooked for occurrence of favouring circumstances, of happy opportunity, which by presenting itself makes all the difference in the world. From the lack of it, careers, which at the outset seemed full of promise, end in failure and in poverty, while men from whom little might have been expected are almost carried forward into success by some tide in affairs which has presented itself to them at a critical moment. This element of opportunity is strictly beyond our own control; and whence, whence comes it? We veil the reality from our eyes and from the eyes of others when we speak of "accident," and "chance," and "luck." No serious believer in God can allow that these phantoms of the brain have any real existence whatever. They are mere blinds of our own making which we let down when we want to keep the light of God's countenance from shining in at the windows of the soul. If a war, or a commercial depression, or a failure of crops, or a sudden activity of some form of foreign industry, which, as we have seen, has proved fatal to the enterprise of others, did not occur at the period of our lives when it must have brought us disappointment or ruin, this is not luck or chance. It is his will and doing, out of whose bounty, and by the employment of whose gifts, we make our fortune, if we make it at all. But perhaps wealth has come to us from those who have won it and left it to us; or we have long since toiled for it, and have retired from the strain and the vicissitudes of business, and now we are independent, and all that that fascinating word implies—*independent of the freaks of fortune, as we call them,—independent of the assistance and goodwill of our fellow creatures,—independent, so far as our income goes (as we think, if we do not say it) of him who gave it us. Are we thus independent? Is our property so secure that nothing can touch it—that we seem to hold it not from God, but from the well understood and solid guarantees which are furnished by modern civilization? Surely, brethren, it is a mistake to think that the security of property has become greater as civilization has advanced. In early days when a man kept his stock of wealth in his strong box, and buried it under the floor of an outhouse at the approach of an invader, the wealth, I admit, was not very productive, but, at least, it was not exposed to the risks which might—which would—await it now. The immense development and organization of credit reposing upon an extension and complexity of business of which our ancestors never dreamt has made money do much more work than it did of yore, but at the greater risk of its possessor. The vast operations which require the contri-*

GOD THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS.

butions of numberless small fortunes in order to be carried out at all, and which encourage these contributions by remunerative rates of interest, are themselves exposed to the shock of occurrences wholly beyond the control of those who direct, and much more beyond the control of those who contribute to sustain them. Never before in the history of the world was the property of millions of persons so exposed to the destructive action of causes which in other days would only have assailed the fortunes of the few. Never was the truth that riches make to themselves wings and flee away written more plainly upon the very face of life; never was it more certain, for all who have eyes to see and ears to hear, that the retention of wealth is not less the work of God than its original acquisition. "All things come of thee." How true is this of health, the preciousness of which we only know when we have lost or are losing it. While health lasts in its full vigour, it is often apt to produce no less forgetfulness of God than riches. A man feels the full flush and glow of life. He is buoyant with the spirits that are produced by a sense of the harmony and the vigour of the various functions of the body. The very relish of the gift seems to insure its perpetuity. Imagination cannot so far forecast the future as to conceive of its withdrawal. And then this man walks out into the street, and he buys a book which tells him how to prolong health into later life by temperate habits and by observing the rules which protect the body against the foes of health; and, in order to encourage him, the book tells him that his health is in his own power. So, to a certain extent, it is, but only to a certain extent. The secret of its collapse may be altogether beyond him. A tubercle may already be forming in his lung; an artery may be on the point of giving way near his brain; and health and life are forfeited. Considering the complexity, the delicacy, of the bodily organs—of the nerves, the fibres, the muscles, the arteries, upon whose vigour and harmony health depends, the wonder is not that we should lose it, but that we should so long retain it. Those who believe that God keeps his own world cannot fail to trace his hand in that wide region of contingent circumstances by which health is so powerfully affected, and over which man himself has no kind of control. Health, too, is God's gift, and it is retained at his good pleasure.

"All things come of thee." So it is with the powers of the mind. God gives them, and we hold them so long as he pleases, and no longer. Not a few men of great mental powers have appeared to forget that mind is a gift at all. They know how much they themselves have done by study to develop and enrich their intellects. They are so conscious of wielding a force before which other men bow down and do homage that they cannot bring themselves to think that there is one being in existence to whom they owe it all, and who might at any moment withdraw it. And yet those to whom God has given these higher endowments are not seldom reminded that they hold them upon sufferance, by this one fact

GOD THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS.

among others—that they cannot certainly exercise them at will. How little is the exercise of the mental powers within our control—at least during large portions of our lives. Some years, perhaps, have passed since we made a particular subject our own by study, by reflection, by conversation with others. We laid it by, as if it were a permanent acquisition occupying a shelf in our minds from which it might be taken down and examined and reproduced at pleasure. And an occasion presents itself when we find ourselves obliged to draw on this stock of long since acquired thought and knowledge, when lo, we discover that we retain little more than the skeleton of our old possession. The main facts are there still. The outline is there. But all that gave it vividness and life has passed away, and we try in vain to recover the warmth and coloring, the abundant and detailed interest, which once stirred our thoughts and imaginations in regard to it. So, too, with the exercise of faculties which may have seemed in by-gone years completely at our command. Bishop Wilberforce used to say, ready as he generally was, that there were times when it caused him almost physical suffering to speak to order on a given subject. The subject was there, and a moderate amount of industry would master its details, but how so to deal with it as to kindle the responsive sympathy of others—how to speak from the soul when, for the moment, the soul is speechless—how to be vigorous, when everything within the mind is flabby and tame—how to move forward with ease and force, when every thought has to be extracted by a violent mechanical effort—that was the question. There are days when we feel that the higher and more original powers of the mind are just as little within our control as the weather; and the sense of this may well suggest from whom indeed we hold them and how precariously. Nor is this all. The day may come to the wisest, to the most thoughtful, to the most brilliant of men, when life will not yet have been forfeited, but when all that can be called mind will have ceased to live—when the bright glance of intelligence will have been replaced by a vacant stare,—when the lips upon which, in old days, men waited for the utterance of wisdom and reflection, produce nothing that is coherent or even sensible—when here and there, at least, one flash of the old fire illumines for a moment the darkness of the ruin, only to make it more bitterly felt. Few of us can have lived for many years without seeing how the giver of high intellect may completely withdraw his gift—without feeling when we are confronted by these distressing and overwhelming catastrophes how completely from day to day we depend on him for its retention.

“All things come of thee.” Need it be said that this especially applies to those powers by which our souls are raised to a higher level than unassisted nature knows of and are enabled to hold communion with the Being who made us. Grace, which proceeds, as the word implies, from God’s bounty, is itself much more than mere favour such as results in no

GOD THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS.

form of active assistance. Such a concession as that is unworthy of God. Grace is an operative, impelling, controlling force, by which the understanding is enlightened to see spiritual truth—by which the affections are warmed to embrace beauty—by which the will is braced and strengthened to do what the illuminated conscience may prescribe. Grace is in its essence a divine presence in the regenerate man—the presence of the new man Christ Jesus, who “after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” And the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest of the ancient saints, because this great gift of an inward presence has been conferred on him through the bounty of the Redeemer and the ministrations of the Spirit in the church of Christ. Insight into great and solemn truths—the power of prayer—the resourcefulness and the activities of benevolence—the sense of belonging already to an invisible world in which the soul breathes freely as in its true and eternal home—these are but some of the prerogatives of the life of grace. It comes from God, and when this is for a moment forgotten, how grave may be the ruin! Through this forgetfulness, again and again in the Christian church Lucifer has repeated his fall from heaven. The soul’s eye has been withdrawn from the giver—has centred on itself, the recipient, as if the rightful owner of an inalienable endowment; and lo! the gift has been withdrawn. The eye that was clear-sighted sees nothing clearly—nothing as it really is. The arm that was so powerful is paralyzed. Heaven which was the soul’s home before its time is a dark canopy spreading over life; and all that drags man down and that degrades him has reasserted its sway over a spirit that but now was the companion of angels and lived as if it were of the lineage of the saints. Yes, “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” And this great truth should express itself in the spirit of sacrifice resting on the conviction that whatever we give to God is already his. And the spirit of sacrifice is engaged constantly in twofold activity. It is either consenting with humble resignation, if not with glad acquiescence, to that which God exacts, or it is making some effort of its own to acknowledge the debt of which it is never unconscious. And each of these forms of sacrifice is suggested to us to-day. It is a day which, year by year, is devoted by the church to the memory of the children who were slain by King Herod when he was endeavouring to destroy the infant Christ. The Feast of the Holy Innocents stands third of the three festivals which follow in the church calendar immediately on the birthday of our divine Redeemer; and these three days, it has often been noticed, represent three different kinds of martyrdom. St. Stephen was a martyr in will and in deed; St. John the Evangelist, a martyr in will, but not in deed; the holy innocents in deed, but not in will.

It may be said that this last can only be termed martyrdom by a forced use of language, since, properly speaking, it is essential that the witness to truth which the martyr bears should be a voluntary

witness, but at least the holy innocents did forfeit their lives for the sake of Jesus Christ; and God, we may be sure, accepted the sacrificed, and has given them a place of honour and of light in the kingdom of his Son for whom they died. But it is observable that the evangelist turns our attention to the mothers of these slaughtered babes, when they remind him of their ancestress, Rachel, as Jeremiah had pictured her weeping from her tomb in Ramah over her unhappy descendants, as they were being led past it in chains on their way to Babylon, and weeping now again in Bethlehem, as it seems, over the victims of the rage and jealousy of the Idumean king. Yes, these mothers were called to sacrifice. They had to resign themselves to that which costs flesh and blood one of its most painful efforts. Types they were of numberless mothers in Christendom whose infants God takes from their arms into his everlasting keeping—of some, I have reason to think, who are here to-day. What can a mother whose heart is broken by the loss of a child in whom all her hopes were centred do, but pray that she may enter into the spirit of David's words,—“This infant, O Father of heaven was thine—thine by creation—thine in a deeper and more perfect sense by union with thy Son in baptism, and at thy bidding I give it back to thee. It must be better that thou shouldest recall thine own since thou so willest it.” And probably not a few who hear me have been called on to give up at the bidding of God during this past year something that was, in whatever way, dear to them. You may have suffered by one of those great collapses of credit by which the past year-and-a-half will be unhappily remembered. You may have exchanged plenty and ease for poverty and discomforts of which you had had no previous experience. Or you have for the first time experienced what is meant by the loss of health—the changed aspect of life—the weariness by day and by night—the haunting sense of some approaching collapse—the dread of a dark and uncertain failure; and perhaps, bad health has brought with it, among other things, a consciousness of impaired mental powers, just when they would be so welcome as a kind of set-off against physical weakness. Or some great hope centring in some object of care or affection, cherished for many years, cherished under difficulties, cling to in spite of appearances, and, as it seemed, perhaps quite lately, likely to be realized, has now at last disappeared from sight, and has to be abandoned for ever. Or some friend or relation upon whose presence all the brightness and comfort of your life depended has been called away into the kingdom of the dead. The forms of sacrifice to which God invites us are indeed almost as various as our several characters. The essential thing is to remember that in each one of them he is recalling in part or wholly his own gifts, and bidding us learn ever more to say from the heart,

“If thou should'st call me to resign
What most I prize, it ne'er was mine;
I only yield thee what is thine.
Thy will be done.”

GOD THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS.

"Of thine own have we given thee." Besides the sacrifice of resignation, there is the sacrifice of effort. We are still, and until next Thursday, keeping the great festival of the birth of Christ. What was that birth but the first act of the greatest sacrifice that ever went up from earth to heaven—of the one sacrifice that deserves the name, by which all others are measured, in which all others find their consecration? That sacrifice was finished on the cross of Calvary; but in the intention of the divine victim it began before he manifested himself in the world of sense. "When he is coming into the world he saith, The meat offering and the burnt offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. Burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo I come to do thy will, O Lord." "A body hast thou prepared me." The manhood of our Lord—his body and his human soul was created by God when he, the Son of God, became incarnate through being conceived of the Holy Ghost. He folded this stainless nature round his eternal person, and then he led it forth to sacrifice, and his earthly life was a long series of sacrificial efforts which ended in a death of agony and shame. When he lay in the manger, this sacrificial work had already begun. When he hung dying upon the cross, it was being completed. In those last moments of agony and shame he was controlling the forces that seemed to be mastering him. He was a priest upon his cross, and withal he was the victim. He was, as his apostle says, through the eternal Spirit offering himself immaculate to God. His life was not wrung out of him, but, when the due moment had arrived, he himself pronounced its dismissal. He gave it up to him whose it was. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

And this is the second great department of Christian effort—a willingness to make voluntary sacrifices on the ground that we are giving God his own. A willingness to make such sacrifices is the true test of life in a church. It is the true test of life in a Christian. No act, no amount of activity, which does not involve sacrifice proves that a church is really living. No amount of interest in religion unaccompanied by the mark of sacrifice proves the life of a soul. Willingness, at least, to do something which costs effort, (and the more secretly the better)—willingness to undergo something which imposes pain (and the more secretly the better)—these are the fundamental tests of a true Christian life, providing, as they do, that the spirit of the church or of the man in which they are found is at one with the spirit of the divine Redeemer.

To-day we should look back upon the year which is past with this view, and ask ourselves whether we have forgone some gain or honour, or given up some wealth, or embraced of our free will some annoyance, for his sake to whom we owe our life in nature and in grace; and if across this tract of time we can see nothing that has on it the ennobling stamp of sacrifice, then let us resolve here and now to do or to

GOD THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS.

endure something which shall, if it may be, whatever it be really worth, cost us much. No natural gifts, no successes, no warm feelings, no congratulations of friends, no certificates of distinction, mental or moral, can really ennoble a life which lacks this one indispensable patent of true nobility. We shall not be long at a loss how to obtain it if we are serious. Love is inventive, and love is the parent of all sacrifice that deserves the name. No doubt, on the last Sunday in the year, there is much else to claim a place in thought. Few men are so light-hearted, so frivolous, as to be wholly insensible to what is meant by the close of another of these periods of time which form a considerable portion in the longest span of human life. Few men can help pausing and looking around them, and feeling the solemnity of events, public as well as private, when we measure them by a quickened sense of the lapse of time. The danger is, dear brethren, lest, with such abundant materials for thought as the closing year suggests, nothing practical should issue from our reflections—lest after entertaining ourselves with a retrospective reverie we should forthwith be and do a fortnight hence exactly as before. The close of a year is a solemn call to recognise the great truth which David confesses—that life and all that surrounds and all that belongs to it comes from God and is due to God, and that every true life must be salted with the spirit of sacrifice, at one while expressing itself in voluntary effort—at another in humble resignation. For this great purpose life is still our own, but we know not how much or how little of it may yet remain to us. The hours are passing. They are put down. "*Pereunt et imputantur.*" As they pass, let us try to remember that, like all else, they too, each one of them, come from the eternal being, and that, in consecrating them to him, we are only giving him that which is his own.

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES.

A SERMON

BY THE

REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(Canon of St. Paul's,)

PREACHED IN

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

On SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 28th, -1878.

London: F. DAVIS, (late J. PAUL), 1, Chapter House Court, North
Side of St. Paul's; and Paternoster Row

A Sermon.

"And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God thou knowest."—Ezekiel xxxvii, 3.

THOSE who have read the prophet Ezekiel—and he is, perhaps, less read than any other book in the Old Testament—will remember this vision of the dry bones. Like many other visions, before and since, it was partly shaped by the circumstances of the times. The horrors of the Chaldean invasion, which had resulted in the carrying away of the Jewish people into Babylon, were still fresh in the memories of men. In many a valley, on many a hill side, in southern Palestine, the track of the invading army as it advanced and retired would have been marked by the bones of the unoffending but slaughtered peasantry. In his work on Nineveh, written some years ago, Mr. Layard has described such a scene in Armenia—an upland valley covered by the bones of a Christian population which had been plundered and murdered by the Kurds. Such a scene may well have suggested to Ezekiel the background of the vision which the prophetic spirit so shaped as to express a truth which Israel needed to know. Ezekiel, wrapt in a spiritual ecstasy, was set down in the midst of a valley that was full of bones. He was caused to pass by them round about. He marked their great number: he marked their dryness. They were the bones of a multitude of men who had been slain long since. He was asked by the divine being with whom he was the while in close communion, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel knew that nothing was impossible with God. He knew, too, that what was possible might be forbidden by necessities, by laws, of which he knew nothing, and he reverently answered, "O Lord God, thou knowest." And forthwith he was made the instrument through which the question which had been put to him was answered. "He said unto me, prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones—Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live; and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord." And then Ezekiel continues—"So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo! the sinews and flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them." That was the first stage of the revival. It was still incomplete. Something more was needed—something which the prophet goes on to describe. "Then said he unto me, prophesy unto the breath," or spirit: "prophesy, Son of Man, and say to the spirit, come from the four

winds, O spirit, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." And then he continues, "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. That was the second stage of the revival. And it is followed by an explanation of the purpose of the vision. But let us at this point ask ourselves the question—What are we to understand by the dry bones of the vision of Ezekiel?

The dry bones of Ezekiel's vision are, doubtless, to begin with, the bones of human bodies—bones from which the flesh had been either stripped or decayed away through exposure to the air. Ezekiel beholds a shaking—a coming together of these bones. He sees them again clothed with flesh and sinews, and, finally, the breath comes into them and they live. They stand on their feet.

This is plainly the picture of a resurrection—not, indeed, of the general resurrection, because what Ezekiel saw was, clearly, limited and local, but, at the same time, it is a sample of what will occur at the general resurrection. And on this ground the passage is read by the church as a proper lesson on Easter Tuesday. It may be urged that this representation is presently explained to refer to something quite distinct—namely, the restoration of the Jewish people from Babylon, and, therefore, that what passed before the prophet's eyes need not have been regarded by him as more than an imaginary or even impossible occurrence intended to symbolize the coming event. But, if this were the case, the vision, it must be said, was very ill adapted for its proposed purpose. The idea of a restoration from Babylon was, humanly speaking—was, politically speaking—sufficiently improbable already without heightening this existing improbability by what is thus supposed to have been a greater improbability still. Men do not learn to accept difficult or unfamiliar truth through the assistance of truth still more unfamiliar—still more difficult. The fact is that the form of Ezekiel's vision and the popular use which Ezekiel made of it shows that at this date the idea of the resurrection of the body cannot have been a strange one to religious Jews. Had it been so, Ezekiel's vision would have been turned against himself. The restoration from the captivity would have been thought more improbable than ever, if the measure of its probability was to be found in a doctrine unheard of as yet by the people of revelation. We know, in fact, from their own scriptures, that the Jews had had, for many a century, glimpses, more or less distinct, of this truth. Long ago the mother of Samuel could sing that the Lord bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up; and Job could be sure that though worms destroyed his body yet in his flesh he would see God; and David, speaking for a higher being than himself, yet knows that God will not leave the soul in hell or suffer his Holy One to see corruption; and Daniel, Ezekiel's contemporary, or nearly so, foresees that many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And later on the courageous mother of the seven Maccabean martyrs cries to her dying son—"The creator of the world who formed all the generations of man, and found out the beginning of all things will also in his mercy give you life and breath again if you regard not yourselves for his law's sake." Undoubtedly, there was among the Jews a certain belief in the resurrection of the body, a belief which this very vision must have at once represented and confirmed. Men shrink from admitting the idea that there will be a resurrection of the dead, on the ground, mainly, that it involves an exertion of divine power to which nothing exactly corresponds within the range of every day experience. Whether it is quite wise to make the range of our experience a measure of what God can do may be more than questionable. But, at least, the doctrine of the resurrection of all men from

the dead involves no greater difficulty for a thoughtful man than that which he already encounters if he believes seriously in God at all, for belief in God involves, as a necessary part of itself, a belief in the creation of the universe out of nothing. However you may multiply the centuries during which man is supposed to have existed on the surface of this planet—however vast may be the tracts of time which you may demand as theoretically necessary to fill up the interval between some primary chaos and man's first appearance on the scene—say what you will about the date of the solar system or of the fixed stars, or of the presumable history of their evolution—still in the last resort, in the rear of all these theories amid which the scientific imagination may run such splendid riot, the question of questions awaits you. It can not be ignored; it can not be eluded—How did the original matter out of which all that we see around us itself take shape? How did this originally come to be? That is the question into which all others ultimately resolve themselves, and upon the answer which is given to it depends no less an issue than belief or disbelief in the existence of God; for if you say that original, unformed, unevolved matter always existed, then you deny the existence of the being whom we call God. God—he is nothing if he is not the alone everlasting,—if he is not the source of all else that is,—if he is not in his essence altogether spiritual, immaterial. If there existed from everlasting side by side with God, a something which you call matter which was not himself—which was in its essence distinct from himself—which did not owe its existence to him, and which, as being itself presumably eternal, contradicts the first law of his being as the source of all that is besides himself, then God the creator of all things has no existence. But if, having on independent grounds a clear and strong belief in God, you deny, as you must deny, the eternity of matter, then you must trace the origin of the raw material out of which this universe has been fashioned, in whatever way, back to God. How did it come from him? If it escaped from him—and what would be this escape of matter from the immaterial—if it escaped from him without, or against, his will, then he is no longer master—not merely in his creation but of himself. Being God he must have summoned it into being by a free act of his free will. There was nothing out of which to frame it, and therefore he must have summoned it out of nothing. There was vacancy, and he bade the rude elements of matter to begin to be. It was something to fashion man out of the existing dust of the earth, but to give existence to the dust of the earth when, as yet, there was nothing, was an infinitely higher exercise of power. Think, my brethren, what this means—creation out of nothing—that act with which every thinking and sincere believer in God must necessarily credit him, and then compare it with the relatively puny difficulties which we are told ought to arrest the hand of the great creator on the day of the general resurrection. It is not for us to trace his methods of procedure by audacious guesses, or to say how he will restore to each human body such of its proper materials as may have drifted away into subtle connections with other forms; but this I take it as certain to any reasonable man—that no difficulties about the resurrection of the body can seriously suspend our belief in it, if we do believe already in God as really God, that is as the creator, and believe further that he has told us that he will one day raise the bodies of all men from the dead.

Ezekiel's vision, then, may remind us of what Christ our Lord has taught us again and again in his own words of the resurrection of the body; but its teaching by no means ends with this, for the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision may well represent the lifeless condition of societies of men at particular times in their history—the condition of nations, of churches, of less important institutions. Indeed, Ezekiel, as we have seen, was left in no kind of doubt

about the divinely intended mission of his vision. The dry bones were a picture of what the Jewish nation believed itself to be as a consequence of the captivity in Babylon. All that was left of it could be best compared to the bones of the Jews who had been massacred by the Chaldean invader, and which bleached on the hill sides of Palestine. "He said unto me, Son of Man, these bones are the house of Israel. Behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost. As for us we are cut off." Certainly, in the captivity little was left to Israel beyond a skeleton of its former self. There were the sacred books; there were royal descendants of the race of David; there were priests; there were prophets; there was the old Hebrew and sacred language not yet wholly corrupted into Chaldean; there were the precious and loved traditions of the past great days of Jerusalem. These were the dry bones of what had been Israel. There was nothing to connect them. They lay on the soil of heathenism. They lay apart from each other as if quite unconnected; nay, rather—for the form of the representation changes as the explanation succeeds the vision—they now lay buried beneath the soil—beneath the thick layer of Pagan life, of Pagan worship, of Pagan oppression, of Pagan vice, which buried them out of sight. To the captive people, Babylon was not merely a valley of dry bones—a social and political neighbourhood which was fatal to the corporate life of Israel as the people of revelation: Babylon was a grave. And, accordingly, the prophet was desired to address his countrymen—"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and will bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and caused you to come up out of your graves." And this is what really did happen at the restoration of the Jews from Babylon. Each of the promises in Ezekiel's vision was fulfilled. First, the divine breath came upon the bones and they lived. The remains of the past of Israel—its sacred books, its priests, its prophets, its laws, its great traditions, its splendid hopes—these once more moved in the soul of the nation. As if with the motion of reviving life, they came together. They were readjusted into an harmonious whole. They received the clothing of bone and sinew which originally belonged to them. And the nation thus reconstructed in the days of its captivity was lifted, by the divine power, when the moment came, out of the grave, and restored to the upper air of its ancient home in Palestine. It was a wonderful restoration, almost, if not altogether, unique in history. We see it in progress in such a psalm as the 119th, which, doubtless, belongs to this very period, and which exhibits the upward struggles of a sincere and dutiful soul at the first dawn of the national restoration; and we read of its completion in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was completed when the temple, the centre of the spiritual and national life, was fully rebuilt, and when the old life of the people in its completeness was thus renewed upon the spot which had been the home of their fathers from generation to generation.

And something of the same kind has been seen in portions of the Christian church. As a whole we know the church of Christ can not fail; the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; but particular churches may fail in very different degrees. National churches, provincial churches, local churches—these, like the seven churches in Asia, which stand as a warning for all the ages of Christendom, may experience very varying degrees of corruption, of ruin, and of the moral insensibility which precedes death. So it was with the church of Rome, so long ago, even, as in, the tenth century. Those who know the history of that century know that no man could ever have violated the spirit and the law of Christ more flagrantly than did the rulers of the Roman church in that dark and miserable age, and yet this age was suc-

ceeded by a striking moral and religious restoration. And so it has been, although in a somewhat different sense, with the Church of England, and more than once since the Reformation. During the past week we may have seen in the public prints accounts of the completion of a new college at one of our universities, which has been erected on a more splendid scale than anything of the kind in England, for, at least, two hundred years. What has been the motive for this enterprise? This college bears the name of a quiet country clergyman whom, during his lifetime, nobody in authority thought worthy of patronage or notice. After a short career at his university he died at a country parsonage. And it may well be asked, What was the work which has earned for him, at the hands of his fellow-churchmen, this unprecedented distinction after his death? The answer is that, when John Keble entered on the work of his life, the Church of England was, to a considerable extent, in a condition which answered to Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. She had succeeded to a splendid inheritance, but she understood her privileges very imperfectly. By large numbers of her people, the higher, nobler sides of the Christian life—its pathos, its awfulness, its risks, its strength, its capacities for heroism, its capacities for sacrifice, its secret powers derived from communion with the unseen, its magnificent prospects which dwarf down into insignificance all that merely meets the eye of sense—this had been forgotten. For them the kingdom of heaven had come to be almost as one of the kingdoms of this world. The episcopate was merely the form of church government approved of by the state in this part of the empire. The sacraments were old ceremonies pleasing to the religious sentiment, but very far indeed from being necessary to salvation. The Bible was a venerable book—the most venerable of books—but nobody knew exactly what criticism would presently say of it; and, as for the prayer-book, it was described as a human compilation just three hundred years old. Think of the case of a soul which might hope, from the echoes of the gospel resounding down the centuries, that a home had been found for it on earth—a home in which its sorrows might be consoled and its aspirations encouraged, and then wending its way into a church which had so largely forgotten its first love as this! There are those still living who can say what has happened to such souls in that dreary period; but it was the high privilege of the man whom we are thinking of, more, perhaps, than of any other man, to bring the remedy. Not from any position which of itself commanded attention, but as relying on the native force and beauty and majesty of truth, he published a collection of poems, unwillingly enough, which has had more effect than a thousand volumes of more pretentious character. No one could think less highly of the “Christian Year” than did its humble-minded author, and it was in the judgment of very competent judges inferior as poetry to other works of his pen. It was merely fugitive. It was careless of finish and of symmetry. It was indistinct. It was hard to be understood by those who had not the key to understand it. It was eminently a book which was not made, but which grew and was marked with the rude irregularities of growth as distinct from the polish and the finish of mere manufacture. But underneath its language—above and beyond its literary faults whatever they were—there was a subtle, fine, penetrative,—I may dare to say a divine,—spirit, which belonged to religious genius of the very highest order, and which has renewed the faith of the Church of England. It breathed through this book upon the dry bones around it. It clothed once more the chief pastors of the church in the garb of apostles. It traced beneath the form of the sacraments the inward grace which unites with Christ. It supplied a point of view for reading the sacred scriptures intelligently, and yet as an inspired whole, and with a constant sense of their profound, their unfathomable

meaning. It lighted up the prayer-book as a beautiful relic of the best work of the primitive church, upon which the sixteenth century, while removing blemishes and corruptions, has, after all, only lightly laid its hand. It did this after such a fashion that at last we understand it. Even yet we are too near the date of the publication of this book to take an accurate measure of all that it has done for the English church, but we can see enough to be sure that through it breathed the breath of heaven by which dying churches are renewed,—by which the dry bones of past ages of faith and love are again clothed upon with the substance of life.

And some of us may have noted a little resurrection in some institution, neither as divine as a church nor yet so broad, so inclusive, as a nation—in a school, a college, a hospital, a charitable guild, a company. It is the creation—it is the relic—of a distant age. It is magnificent in its picturesqueness. It lacks, alas! nothing but life. It treasures up statutes which are no longer observed. It observes ceremonies and customs which have lost their meaning. It stoutly upholds a phraseology and livery which tell of a past time, and of which the object has been forgotten. On certain days in the year its members meet. They go through the accustomed usages. They signalize their meeting, it may be, by a splendid banquet—by commanding oratory; but in their heart of hearts they know well that they are meeting in a valley of dry bones. The old rules, usages, phrases, dresses—these are scattered around them like the bones in the valley of Ezekiel's vision. The life which once animated and clothed them has long since perished away. They lie apart without connection with each other—without attempt at arrangement—without the decencies of order; and the question is "Who shall bring them together? Who shall restore to them movement and power?" Who shall clothe them with flesh and blood, and make them once more what they were meant to be?" And on such occasions there are always those who would cry with a modern prophet of despair—

"Poor fragments of a broken world
Whereon men pitch'd their tent,
Why were ye, too, to death not hurl'd,
When your world's day was spent?
That glow of central fire is done,
Which, with its fusing flame,
Knit all your hearts and kept in one;
But ye—ye are the same."

But we can think, it may be, of cases where a nobler spirit than this has prevailed—where a man has appeared, who, instead of contemptuously sweeping away what the past has left, sets himself to gather, to arrange, to combine—if it may be, to reconstruct—sets himself above all to invoke that divine Spirit of life and grace who alone can restore life to the dead and inaugurate a moral and social resurrection. Before he began his work the thought came to him too—"Can these bones live?" But believing that resurrection is the will of God, the author of life, whether moral or physical, he went forward. It was enough for him to say, "O Lord, thou knowest." And he heard, not long after, the divine command, "Son of man prophesy unto the breath, and say, O breath, come unto these bones that they may live."

And, lastly, the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision may be discovered, and that not seldom, within the human soul. When a soul has lost its hold on truth or grace—when it has ceased to believe, or ceased to love, all the traces of what it once has been do not forthwith disappear. There are survivals of the old believing life—fragments of the skeleton of the old convictions—bits of stray logic which once guarded a creed—phrases which expressed the feeling

which once winged a prayer. There may remain on in the arid desolation a very valley full of dry bones—of aspirations which have no goal; of opinions which have no real basis—no practical consequences; of friendships which are felt to be hollow, but which are still kept up; of habits which have lost all meaning but which it is hard to surrender. Not seldom may we meet with writers and with talkers, with historians, with poets, whose language shows that they have once known what it is to believe, but for whom a living faith has perished utterly, and left behind it only these dried up relics of its former life. Such a case—it may be, partially at least, that of some who hear me—such a case must suggest the solemn question, can these bones live? Can these phrases, these forms, these habits, these associations which once were part of a spirit's life—can they ever again become what they were? Is it worth while to treasure them? Were it not better—were it not more sincere—to have done with them altogether—to disavow what we no longer mean—to abandon habits of devotion which have become for us only forms—to break with practices of piety, of benevolence, which are only due now to the surviving impetus of habit? Why should the soul be thus a charnel house of the past? Why not clear it out and begin afresh with some such new life as may yet be possible? Brethren, it is better, believe me, to respect the dry bones though they are only dry bones. They have their value in that they witness to a loving past. They have their value in that they point on to a possible restoration in the future. On them, too, the breath of God may light. Into them may yet be infused a new quickening force. It is easy enough to decry religious habit as only habit—as motiveless, soulless, unaccepted service. Doubtless, habit which is only habit is not life, but it is better, I dare to say, than nothing at all—better if not in itself, yet, surely for the sake of that which it may lead on to. A man may have ceased to mean his prayers. His prayers may now be but the dry bones of that warm and living communion which he once held with God; but do not let him, on that account, give them up. Do not let him break with the little that remains of what once was life. It is easy to decry habit, but habit may be the scaffolding which saves us from a great fall. Habit may be the arch which bridges over a chasm that yawns between one height and another on our upward road. Habit without motive is sufficiently unsatisfactory, but habit is better, better far, than nothing.

Some of us it may be, surveying shrivelled the elements of our religious life cannot avoid the question which is borne in upon us from heaven—"Can these bones live?" They seem to us in our best moments so hopelessly dislocated, so dry, so dead, and to this question the answer always must be, "O Lord God, thou knowest." Yes, he does know. He sees, as he saw of old into the grave of Lazarus—he sees, as he saw into the tomb of the Lord Jesus—so into the secrets of a soul of whose faith and love only these dry bones remains; and he knows that life is again possible—ay, that it is much more than possible. The word of his power may again clothe with form and with flesh. The breath of his spirit may again impart animation, warmth, movement, growth. The quickening power of Christ's resurrection, from which all recovery, whether moral or social or physical, must go forth—this may assert itself victoriously in that desert soul, so that like as Christ was raised from the dead in the glory of the Father even so this soul should walk in newness of life.

THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVINCING THE WORLD.

A SERMON

BY THE

REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(*Canon of St. Paul's*),

PREACHED IN

St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday Afternoon, April 29, 1877.

"And when He is come He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John xvi., 8.

In to-day's Gospel our Lord is speaking, just before His own death, of the work of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who was to descend upon the apostles when He Himself had ascended into Heaven. "If I depart," says our Lord, "I will send Him unto you; and when He is come He will reprove (or convince) the world." And this passage is chosen for to-day's Gospel, because Whitsuntide is now drawing on, and it is time to begin to think what blessings we owe to the coming of the Holy Spirit, that we may the better enter, heart and soul, into the joy of the Whitsun festival. Observe here that the Holy Spirit is to do a certain work on or for the world. And by "the world," in passages like this, is meant, of course, not the world of nature—not even the entire human race, but mankind so far as mankind is generally opposed to the mind of God. The word "world," in this sense, is not merely a description; it is an implied condemnation. It means human life, so far as it is in opposition to the life of Jesus Christ and His true disciples. See how this opposition runs through our Lord's sayings about the world. "Ye," He says to His disciples, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Or, again, in His prayer to the Father—"I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me that they may be Thine." Again, to the disciples—"Peace, I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you." Again, speaking of the crucifixion, "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." Again, with reference to the Comforter—"The Spirit of truth whom the world can not receive, because it seeth Him not neither knoweth Him, but ye, My disciples, know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Observe how much our Lord says to the disciples about the blessings which they would receive from the coming of the Comforter. With them the Comforter, whom the world cannot receive, is to abide for ever. Jesus Himself will send the Comforter to them from the Father. The Comforter will teach them all things. The Comforter will bring all the past sayings of Christ to their remembrance. He never will testify to the world of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will take of the words and works of Christ, and show the true meaning of them to them. He will guide them into all the truth. He will show them the things to come. Thus the disciples were clearly within the circuit of His direct and effective action. And yet it appears that He had something to do for those

outside. He was not going to leave the world utterly to itself because it could not receive Him,—because it neither saw nor knew Him. He would not, indeed, shed on it His higher gifts of prophecy, illumination, guidance into all the truth. He would not be in the world an abiding presence. He would hover around it, teaching it just what it could bear, reproving it by the new and awakened convictions which He would create in it—reproving it by convincing it that sin, righteousness, and judgment, which it had vaguely talked about for ages, were solemn realities. “He shall convince”—not without reproof—that is the sense of the word—“He shall convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

Now see here, first of all, the work of the Holy Spirit upon the Jewish world of the age of the apostles. It is natural to ask to what particular sin—to what righteousness—to what judgment—was our Lord immediately referring? This question is answered by His own words which follow closely afterwards. “Of sin, because (or in that) they believe not on Me; of righteousness in that I go to the Father and ye see Me no more; of judgment, in that the prince of this world is judged.” The Jewish world of that generation had to be convinced of one particular sin—the sin of not believing in our Lord Jesus Christ: “of sin, in that they believe not on Me.” Unbelief then—at any rate, such unbelief as that of the Jews who heard and saw our Lord—is sin according to his own estimate. It is not merely a variety of mental persuasion differing only from faith in that it rejects that which faith accepts. It is not merely an act of the mind: it is an act of the will, and an act of an intrinsically perverse character. It is not a misfortune like a fever, caught in an infected house, or an accident incurred when travelling by the railway. We cannot help these things. They come upon us from without, and we are their victims. But a man can help believing what he does believe—can help disbelieving what he does not believe, at any rate, within large limits. That is, he is originally responsible for being in the state of mind which, in the event, rejects or accepts the truths of faith. Faith, according to our Lord’s teaching, is a test of a man’s moral character. Faith, like unbelief, is as much, or rather more, a moral than a mental act. We believe—partly, at any rate—that which our moral nature makes us wish to believe. We disbelieve—partly, at any rate—that which, as we foresee, will involve unwelcome results for us, being morally such as we are. The Jews had overwhelming evidence before them to show that Jesus Christ was the Messiah promised in their own prophets; but they did not wish to believe in a teacher who had made them dissatisfied with themselves, and was likely to make them still more so; and accordingly they did not believe in Him. Their wills were able—more than able—to overmaster their understandings, and so our Lord’s teaching and works went for nothing with them, or rather, only enhanced their guilt. “If,” He said, “I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father.”

Here, then, we see the destined work of the Holy Ghost in the Jewish world of that generation. He did not add to the proof which was there to warrant faith in the claim of Christ. He moved

as a softening influence upon the hard wills and hearts of the Jewish people. He suggested to them a doubt whether they really had been simply wishing to get at the truth—whether they had dealt quite fairly with the appeal to their own history and Scriptures which had just been made to them. This influence of the Spirit was very far indeed from being irresistible. The majority of the people still treated it as they had treated the voice and the presence of Christ: they set it aside. But with some it was otherwise—with Apollos, with Gamaliel, with Aquila and Priscilla, with the band of converts whom St. Paul calls the “remnant according to the election of grace.” Nay, on the day of Pentecost itself, when the Holy Spirit had just descended on the apostles, St. Peter, first among them in place, but hitherto, at any rate, weakest and last in purpose, so convinced those of his countrymen, who listened to him, of the greatness of their sins against the love of God manifested in the divine Redeemer, that “they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” The words which they heard with their outward ears were seconded by the whispers of the inward teacher, and men whose hands were yet red with the blood of the crucifixion melted into tears of penitence and faith.

And the Jewish world of that generation had to be convinced of righteousness, the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. “He shall convince the world of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye see Me no more.” The Jews knew what righteousness was, but they had persistently asserted that our Lord was not righteous. On the contrary, they said that He was a sinner, and that God would not hear His prayers. They explained His miracles by saying that He was in league with Beelzebub. They denounced, as blasphemy, His claim to be what He really was; and, when He was put to a shameful death, they regarded this as a proof vouchsafed from heaven that they had been right all along. “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” That was the title which they read on His cross as confirming their own estimate of Him.

It is very difficult to shake a bitter prejudice like this, especially when it has assumed anything like national proportions. It is proof against argument, proof against entreaty, proof against all the ordinary methods of persuasion, proof against any purely human influence, when it has been strengthened and embittered by long controversy. True, Jesus Christ had risen from His grave in vindication of His claims and of His character; but our every day experience may teach us that a fact, however clearly attested, has no sort of influence on persons who have made up their minds not to accept a consequence which necessarily follows from it. The Jews had closed their eyes to the consequence of Christ’s life, and they had no difficulty in inventing explanations to dispose of an unwelcome event like His resurrection, followed by His ascension into heaven.

“I go to the Father,” He said, “and ye see Me no more.” This was nevertheless the fact upon which the Spirit, whispering to the hearts of thousands of Jews, would persistently dwell. That mysterious, triumphant departure of Jesus Christ, the real character of which could be falsified by no accumulation of vulgar reports—what did it mean? Did it not recall all that had preceded it—the words such as never man spake—the acts, each of them the best

possible at the moment, each of them without a flaw—the one life on earth, in which the will of the Father had been perfectly mirrored? Was it not, after all, in harmony with such a life as this? The past rose up before them in memory. The Holy Spirit breathed upon the memory of the past, set it in its true light—discovered its drift, its meaning. They still saw what they had seen before, but they saw it with new eyes. And thus Christ was justified or recognized as righteous in the Spirit, and believed on in the world after He had been received up into glory. Here, again, there was no compulsion. The Spirit would not save the Jewish world from its worst prejudices against its will. Men might, if they would—numbers did—go on asserting, with passionate vehemence intended to silence the insurgent questions within them, their persuasion of the unrighteousness of Jesus; but the Holy Spirit had His triumphs nevertheless. He was at work in the hearts of that very assembly which listened to Stephen—which condemned him to death for proclaiming the Just One, of whom they had been now the betrayers and murderers. It was this rising but unwelcome conviction of the real righteousness of the Crucified, brought home to them by the silent Divine Teacher who seconded the words which fell on their ears, that cut the judges of Stephen to the heart. It was this which sowed the seed that grew up in the soul of Saul of Tarsus, and that changed him from being, in his own words, a blasphemer and a persecutor, into a doctor of the nations in faith and verity. And, for St. Paul, his Master's lofty righteousness was not merely or chiefly a glory of his Master's character; it was a treasure which he, too, reaching out for it the hand of faith, might himself claim. Taught by the Spirit he learned to despise his own righteousness, which was of the law—that poor measure of obedience which was all that he could compass without the grace of Christ—and to prize this higher and perfect righteousness of his Lord as a robe which should cover his own deficiencies—as a gift which should renew his being from within. "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ—the righteousness which is of God by faith."

And once more. The Jewish world of that day had to be convinced of the reality of judgment. The Jews admitted it in words, just as they were very familiar with the language of their scriptures about sin, about righteousness; but they did not believe that they would be judged—that God was judging them. The judgments on which they loved to dwell were God's great judgments on the enemies of Israel in bygone centuries—on Pharaoh, on Agag, on Nebuchadnezzar. Judgment was with them a matter of historical interest: perhaps it was a matter of national pride. They did not think of it as an impending or a present thing for which it behoved them to be prepared. Certainly there were signs in the heaven above and in the earth beneath—signs in the world of thought and in the world of politics—which might have been read even by unobservant eyes as protending coming change and disaster. But to these warnings the eyes at the Jewish world were closed. As we know from the proceedings at our Lord's trial, they resented any expression, although misunderstood, which seemed to them to imply that their temple was not to last for ever. They had no doubt at all that what was really before them was a time, not of judgment, but of splendid and abundant triumph.

Now, the Holy Spirit was to convince the Jewish world, or those members of it who admitted of conviction, of the reality of future judgment, in that the prince of this world was judged. The unseen personal spirit of evil, who had the power of death, was judged by God when death was conquered by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Satan had done his utmost at the birth of Christ, at the temptation of Christ, at each step in our Lord's ministry, at the closing scenes of the Passion, to frustrate the work of the divine Redeemer among men. Satan, from the first, struggled to rid himself of an enemy who threatened the independence and integrity of his own kingdom of unrighteousness. And therefore he entered into the heart of the traitor Judas; and therefore he stirred up the chief priests and Pharisees against our Lord; and therefore he roused the passions of the people to cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" "This is your hour," said our Lord, "and the power of darkness." But at the resurrection, Satan, like lightning, fell from the heaven of empire. Jesus Christ went upon the lion and the adder: the young lion and the dragon He trod under His feet. All the social combinations, all the pedantic speculations, all the passionate resolves, which had for the moment triumphed on Calvary, faded away, and were as though they had not been. As our Lord said, in an earlier review of the issue of the conflict, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are at peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armoury wherein he trusted, and divideth the spoils." The prince of this world was judged. We Christians see this clearly enough now in the light of the past, but to see it then—to see it through the thick brushwood of ancient prejudice, which shut out the sunlight from the mind of a Jew—was no easy matter,—was beyond the reach of ordinary human keensightedness. It was the unseen Teacher—the divine and eternal Spirit, acting with and through the teaching of the apostles—who put the resurrection before the minds of men in its true light, as the decisive turning-point in the great struggle between good and evil—as the judgment of the prince of this world. In this one victory there lay the strength and the promise of victories to come—of what St. Paul calls "the pulling down of strongholds"—strongholds of prejudice, strongholds of error, strongholds of self-interest. Here was the earnest of the coming collapse of the idolatry of the pagan empire to be achieved only after three centuries of martyrdom.

But here also was the warning of a nearer judgment of which the Jewish world particularly must be convinced. In less than half a century the legions of Titus would encamp around the sacred city, and the blood which had been shed on Calvary would be remembered, all too late, amid the ruin and the despair of Jerusalem.

But our Lord's words about sin and righteousness and judgment have a wider scope than this. They suggest to us the three moral ingredients of a healthy public opinion in a Christian country. Every society, every nation, has its public opinion, its common stock of hopes, fears, likings, enthusiasms, repugnances, tastes, points of view—a common stock to which we all of us contribute something, and by which in turn we all are influenced. The cities of the old world, each of them, had a public opinion of its own—Rome and Athens and Jerusalem. And now, too, wherever men

meet, and exchange their thoughts, and know themselves to be bound to each other by ties of race, or of common interest, or of historic association, there grows up inevitably a common fund of thoughts and phrases which may be barbarous—which may be enlightened—but which is always influential. Like the smoke and vapour which hang visibly in the air over every large centre of human life, to which every hearth contributes something, and by which every window is more or less shaded, so in the world of public thought there is a like common product of all the minds which think and feel at all, which in turn influences all that contribute to it, more or less. And what I am now insisting upon is that this inevitable product and accompaniment of human society—public opinion—if it is Christian, must contain a recognition of the three solemn facts of sin, righteousness, judgment.

Of sin, when left to itself, the world at large has no adequate idea—often no idea whatever. The world knows and speaks only of faults, offences, failures, mistakes, misconduct—softer words deliberately chosen. It does not speak of sin. It avoids the word. It recognizes the existence of moral evil. It cannot help doing that, because moral evil in its exaggeration threatens to break up society, to destroy law, to make life unendurable; but the world at large has an eye to its effects, not to the nature of the cause which produces them.

Now, sin is only moral evil as in the light of the law and love of God. Generally speaking, men of the world place moral evil, such as they recognize, in some feebler light—in the light of human law—in the light of personal obligations—in the light of the sense of self-respect—in the light of the judgment of the respectable—in the light of their own common sense.

And in the same way the world has no true idea of righteousness, though it uses—though it respects—the word. It means, by righteousness, conformity to human right, respect for human laws, external propriety, respectability. It has no idea of a righteousness which is an affair of motives—which is, when out of sight, much more than it is when it meets the eye—which cares, at bottom, only for the approval of the Father who seeth in secret,—which will, sometimes—which must, sometimes—defy public opinion—defy current ideas of respectability—defy even human law in defence of some higher right disclosed to conscience.

Nor has the world any true idea of judgment. Judgment is for most men a remote contingency—too remote to be made the subject of practical calculations. It is a dim and far off conception, recognized as necessary for the ideal discipline of the world, but not taken into account as embodied in a coming event with which, one by one, we have to reckon.

Now, the Holy Spirit, acting through the teaching of Scripture—the teaching of the Christian church—the social influence of men who are under His guidance—is continually enriching and raising this poor and degraded public opinion—at least, in countries where the church of Christ is found—by imparting a new and truer estimate of sin and righteousness and judgment. The Holy Spirit, penetrating into the dark places of national opinion, is like a light borne into a cavern, revealing dangers beneath the feet, revealing beauties at the sides and over the head of the explorer, enabling the explorer to discern what is before him. From age to age the Holy Spirit, employing the ascendancy of men of high character

and authority as His instruments—men who have the moral, as distinct from the merely material, interests of their fellow-creatures at heart—is deepening and sharpening the public sense of sin. Thus the national conscience of one generation is tolerant of evil which the next will disallow. And, although there is a reverse side to this, and, in some cases, as in the instance of our own new law of divorce, a nation takes a distinctly retrograde step, yet, upon the whole, the national conscience becomes more sensitive to the perpetration of national wrong: it is convinced of sin. In the same way the Holy Ghost lights up in the conscience of a country the idea of righteousness—teaches men to distinguish real greatness from fictitious greatness—teaches them to distinguish greatness of character from mere greatness of position—to rate simplicity and disinterestedness and honesty of purpose and quick sympathy with wrong, more highly than mere brilliancy or success, combined with good-natured indifference to principle. Above all, He teaches nations to believe that God has not left them to themselves,—that He does take account of their corporate acts,—that has hand stretched out for judgment is to be seen in events which

Hitherto looked to them like the natural products of natural causes. In a word, the work of the Spirit upon opinion is to suggest a new and a higher point of view,—to make men look with new eyes at contemporary events,—to enhance the unseen and the moral at the cost, if it need be, of the visible, of the material,—to suggest the transcendent importance of eternal interests when balanced against those which only belong to time.

There is much else of a very different kind in the public opinion of any Christian country—conspicuously, we must confess it, of this country. But the contribution to it which is made by the Holy Spirit—made through the influence of the Christian Church among us, and of good Christians—is the salt, depend upon it, which saves the nation from perishing of sheer corruption.

And here we see the great responsibility of all, whether in lowly stations or in high, who have any means of influencing for good the public opinion of their countrymen. The words we utter, the words we write, each and all of us, do contribute a something towards the total result. Now, are we, let us ask ourselves, the organs of the Spirit, raising the moral standard of the time, doing our little to convince the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, or are we merely reflecting and representing the more selfish and degrading elements of contemporary thought? Are we echoing its appeals to bad passions, to unworthy prejudices, its indifference to questions of right and duty, when balanced against material interests, real or imaginary? At all times in a nation's history this is a serious question, but especially at a time like the present, when the most thoughtless mind must feel that we are living in presence of great events, and taking our first steps towards an unknown but momentous future. Let us, while thankfully acknowledging God's great gifts to England of a unique position of influence and power in the world,—oh, let us not forget that, whether for men or for nations, no material interests, no sway of empire, no historical prestige, even if these could be threatened, are worth deliberate complicity with barbarous tyranny and wrong; that the highest interests of a country are in its hatred of evil, its love of righteousness, its faith in the judgments of God; that, in a word, "righteousness," as distinct from a "spirited policy"—"righteousness exalteth a nation," while "sin is a reproof to any people."

And in this exterior action of the Spirit upon the public opinion and the conscience of a nation, we see the source of that elevation of character which is sometimes to be found—we must admit it—in men who own no allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ. When men of this kind are named, it is not uncommon to hear the remark that, after all, it cannot matter much whether a country has or has not a faith, because here is such and such a citizen who, morally speaking, does so very well without one—who is so generous, so self-sacrificing, so noble, so unselfish. But the question is, whence did the man get these things? They come to him from the indirect influences of that very faith which he adjures—from detached fragments of the truth deposited, like some jewel in a rude conglomerate deposit, in the crude mass of public opinion, and he has extracted them. That is all. They are the work of his unseen teacher of the reality of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. But for Christianity, little as he thinks it, this man would never have been what he is, though he repudiates his obligations.

And lastly, in these three words—sin, righteousness, judgment—we have before us the three governing ideas—the three moments, so to call them—of the Christian life. The Spirit who convinces the world of sin and righteousness and judgment carries this three-fold conviction with imperious force right into the heart of every true Christian.

First in order, there comes the conviction of sin—of the man's own sins, seen in their number, seen without disguise, seen in their real magnitude. A Christian knows what sin is. He may fall into it again and again, but he does not deceive himself either as to its nature or as to its consequences. The invisible Teacher is there, close at hand, in his very heart, to insist upon the stern truth. And so the Christian is ever on the look-out for sin, ever struggling with its approaches. His falls do not disguise from him for a moment its radical opposition to God and to goodness.

And next, there is the conviction of righteousness. A Christian knows what righteousness is. He has been taught its true standard by the inward Teacher. He knows a saint of Christ when he sees one, though as yet he may be far, very far, from being a saint himself. He knows that, in the impassioned yet accurate language of scripture, any righteousness which could be furnished out of his own moral resources is regarded, as a moral clothing in the sight of the Most Holy, only as filthy rags. And therefore he looks up to the Lord our righteousness, to that sinless and divine Saviour whose righteousness becomes his own when it is claimed by faith, when it is conveyed through the chartered means of grace granted to the church of God.

Above all, the Christian is convinced of judgment. He knows that God is judging him day by day, and that, at the last great day, God will judge him finally, and will award him his place in eternity. The thought of this is constantly before him. It colors, it shapes, his whole idea of the meaning of life and of death. To be thus swayed by fear of sin, by love of a real righteousness, by expectation of the judgment—this is to be led by the Spirit. This is to have passed under the influence of those great creative truths and ideas with which the Spirit was sent down from heaven, that he might purify and fertilize the lives and hearts of men.

Brethren, let us pray Him to perfect His blessed work in us one by one, that, while time lasts and eternity is still future, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" may make us, each one, "free from the law of sin and death."

THE NATURAL IMMORTALITY OF THE HUMAN SOUL.

A Sermon,

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 22ND, 1877,
BY THE REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.
(*Canon of St. Paul's.*)

"Because I live, ye shall live also."—JOHN xiv. 19.

THIS saying of our Lord in the supper-room, like so much else which he uttered there, is only to be understood in the light of his resurrection and ascension into heaven. When he said "Because I live" he had death immediately before him. He was taking the measure of death. Death was to be no real interruption of his ever-continuing life. Death with all its physical, its mental, miseries—death was only an incident in his being; it was in no sense its close. Already he sees the resurrection beyond and he exclaims "I live." It was not possible, as St. Peter puts it, that he, the Prince of Life, should be holden of death. And so he treats death as an already vanquished enemy which cannot have any lasting effect upon his indestructible life. And, farther, this life of his, inaccessible as it was to any permanent injury—enduring, as it was to endure, beyond the cross and the grave—is the cause of ours. "Because I live ye shall live also." He describes what he knows to be impending—"Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more." He would be hidden away in the grave from the eyes of men. He adds, "but ye see me." His disciples would see him; first, with their bodily eyes during the forty days after his resurrection, and next with the eyes of faith throughout all the ages until he comes to judgment; and thus "Because I live ye shall live also." Assured of the enduring continuity of his life, the disciples might be certain—quite certain—of their own. Because he lives after his resurrection—after his ascension in the life of glory, therefore the disciples, in whatever sense, shall live also.

Now here, my brethren, let us observe, first of all, what our Saviour's words do not mean. They do not mean that the immortality of the soul of man is dependent upon the redemptive work or upon the glorified life of Jesus Christ. Man is an immortal being, just as he is a thinking and a feeling being, by the original terms of his nature. God has made man immortal whether for weal or woe. Whether man is redeemed or not, whether he is sanctified or not, he will exist for ever. God might have made man a being subject to annihilation. He has given him a soul which is indestructible; and this quality of the soul of man is just as much a part of man's nature as are the limbs of his body or the peculiarities of his mind. Of late we have heard something of a phrase, new, if I mistake not, to Christian ears,—"*conditional immortality.*" We are told that man is not immortal by the terms of his nature,—that he may become immortal if he is saved by

Christ. Unredeemed man—man in a state of nature, so we are told—becomes extinct, if not at death yet very shortly afterwards when anything that may survive death will fade away into nothingness. This, it is said, is more in keeping with what we see around us, than the old Christian doctrine that every human being will necessarily exist, in whatever condition, for ever. Everything around us changes, decays, passes away, and this dissolution of all the organized forms of matter seems, it is suggested, to forewarn man of his own approaching and complete destruction unless indeed some superhuman power should take him by the hand and confer on him that gift of immortality which in virtue of his own nature he does not possess. Some of the persons who talk and think thus forget that the New Testament treats man as a being who will live after death, continuously on, whether in happiness or in woe. And others forget that before our Lord came the best and most thoughtful men in the old heathen world were satisfied of this truth, as indeed we may be if we will consider how generally unlike the spirit or soul of man is to any material being.

Let us dwell for awhile on some considerations which go to establish this radical unlikeness between spiritual and material beings.

Now the first consideration is that the spirit or soul of man knows itself to be capable, I do not say of unlimited, but certainly of continuous improvement and development. However vigorous a tree or an animal may be, it soon reaches a point at which it can grow no more. The tree has borne all the leaves, buds, flowers, fruits, that it can bear. Its vital force is exhausted: it can do no more. The animal has attained, we will suppose, to the finest proportions of which its species is capable. It has done its best in the way of strength and beauty, and the limit has been reached: it can do no more. With the soul of man, whether as a thinking or a feeling power it is otherwise. Of this we can never certainly say that it has exhausted itself. When a man of science has made a great discovery, or a man of letters has written a great book, or a statesman has carried a series of measures, we cannot say "He has done his all: he is exhausted." Undoubtedly in man the spirit is largely dependent on the material body which encases it. The corruptible body; so says the ancient Hebrew wisdom—the corruptible body presseth down the soul. As the body moves towards decay and dissolution it inflicts something of its weakness—something of its growing incapacity—upon its spiritual companion the soul. But the soul on its part constantly resists and protests against this. The soul asserts its own separate and vigorous existence. The mind of man knows that each new effort instead of exhausting its powers really enlarges them, and that if only the physical conditions which are necessary to continued exertion in the present state of things are not withdrawn it will go on continuously making larger and nobler acquirements. So, too, with the heart, the conscience, the sense of duty. In this too there is no such thing as finality. One noble act suggests another. One great sacrifice for truth or duty prompts another. The virtuous impulse in the soul is not like the life-power of the tree or the animal—a self-exhausting force. On the contrary, it is always, even more consistently than thought, moving forward—

conceiving of and aiming at higher duties—understanding more clearly that, advance as it may, it will not reach the limits of its action. “Be not weary of well-doing.” This is the language of the eternal wisdom to the human will, but never has “Be not weary of growing or thriving” been said to the body of man or animal—to tree or to flower, because organized matter in its most beautiful forms differs conspicuously from spirit in this—that it does reach the limits of its activity and then begins to turn back towards non-existence.

And the second consideration is this. The spirit or mind of man is conscious of, and it values, its own existence. This is not the case with any material being—with any material living forms of life, however lofty or beautiful. The most magnificent tree only gives enjoyment to other beings; it never understands that it itself exists. It is conscious of losing nothing when it is cut down. Poets may fondly treat it as the object of their pity or their sympathy, but it has no interest in its own perfections. An animal does, indeed, feel pleasure and pain, but it feels each sensation as each sensation comes to it. It never puts the sensations together. It never takes the measure of its own life and looks at it as if from the outside as a whole. The animal lives wholly in the present: it has no memory. Now and then some object which it has met before rouses in it a sense of association with some past pleasure or pain, but that is all. Practically, the animal has no past, nor does it look forward. The future is a blank to it. It forecasts nothing. It does not expect the pains or the pleasures of its coming existence. It has no anticipations even of death except such as its senses may immediately convey to it. How different is it with the conscious self-measuring spirit of man. Man’s spirit lives more in the past, more in the future, than in the present, exactly in the degree in which man makes the most of himself. Man, as a spirit, reaches back into the past, reviews it, lives it over again in memory, turns it to account in the way of experience. Man, as a spirit, reaches forward into future time—gazes wistfully at its uncertainties, maps it out—so far as it can, provides for it—at least, conditionally, disposes of it. Man, as a spirit, rises out of—rises above—the successive sensations which make up to an animal its whole present life. Man understands what it is to exist. He understands his relation to other beings and to nature. He sees something—something at any rate—of the unique grandeur of his being among the existences around him. And thus he desires to exist beyond the present into the future which he anticipates—to exist into a very distant future if he may. The more his spirit makes of itself—the more it makes of its powers and its resources—the more earnestly does it desire prolonged existence. And thus the best heathens had the clearest presentiment of a life beyond the grave. These men of high thoughts and noble resolves could not understand that because material bodies were perishing around them therefore conscience, reason, will, the common endowments of human kind, must or could be extinguished too. These men longed to exist—ay, after death, that they might continue to make progress in all such good as they had begun in this life in their high thoughts and their excellent resolves; and with these longings they believed that they would thus

exist, after all, when this life was over. The longing itself, you see, was a sort of proof that this object was real. How else was the existence of the longing to be satisfactorily explained? If all enterprise in thought and in virtue was to be abruptly broken off by the shock of death, at any rate in this longing and in the power of self-measurement out of which it grew, the spirit of man discovered its radical unlikeness to the lower forms of life around it. It became familiar with the idea of a prolonged existence, under other conditions, beyond the grave.

And a third consideration which pointed towards the natural immortality of man—a consideration of much weight—was this: unless a spiritual being is immortal such a being does count for less in the universe than mere inert matter, for matter has a kind of immortality of its own. At any rate, so far as our observation goes, it does not perish. It only changes its form. We speak commonly of the growth and destruction of living things—of trees and animals; but we must be careful how we use any such word as destruction if we mean more than destruction of form,—or any such word as growth if we imagine any real addition to the sum-total of matter in the universe. Existing matter may be combined into new forms of life, and these forms may be dissolved, to be succeeded by new combinations of the same matter. No matter within the range of our human experience ceases to exist: it only takes new shapes, first in one being then in another. The body of the dead animal nourishes the plant which in turn supplies nourishment for and is absorbed into the system of another animal, and this animal in turn is resolved into its chemical elements by death, and then the cycle begins afresh. It is possible that the prediction of the destruction of the world at the last day will be only a new disposition of the sum-total of matter which now makes up this visible universe. It is possible that forms will change beyond all power of imagination to conceive, but that there will be no real increase or diminution of existing material. Certainly every thoughtful believer in God knows that there was a time when matter did not exist, and that a time may come when the will which summoned it into existence may annihilate it; but, within tracts of time so vast as to strain and weary the mind which attempts to contemplate them, matter has a practical immortality—an immortality which would place the spirit of man at a great relative disadvantage if man's spirit ceased to exist at death. If man's spirit really perishes at death the higher part of his nature is so much worse off than the chemical ingredients of his body, or of the bodies of the animals around him, since these, certainly, do survive in new forms. Observe, my brethren, that man's spirit cannot be resolved like his body into form and material, the former perishing while the latter survives. Man's spirit either exists in its completeness or it ceases to exist. The bodily form of William the Conqueror has long dissolved into dust. The material atoms which made up the body of William the Conqueror during his lifetime exist somewhere now beneath the pavement of the great church at Caen; but if the memory and the conscience and the will of the Conqueror have perished, then his spirit has ceased to be. There is no substratum below or beyond these which could perpetuate existence: there is nothing spiritual to survive them, for the

soul of man—your soul and mine—knows itself to be an indivisible whole— a something which cannot be broken up into parts and enter into unison with other souls—with other minds. Each of us is himself. Each can become no other. My memory, my affections, my way of thinking and feeling, are all my own: they are not transferable. If they perish they perish altogether. There are no atoms to survive them which can be worked up into another spiritual existence; and thus the extinction of an animal or a vegetable is only the extinction of that particular combination of matter—not of the matter itself; but the extinction of a soul, if the thing were possible, would be the total extinction of all that made it to be what it ever was. In the physical world, destruction and death are only changes. In the spiritual world the only possible analogous process would mean annihilation. And therefore it is a reasonable and a very strong presumption that spirit is not, in fact, placed at this enormous disadvantage when compared with matter, and that, if matter survives the dissolution of organic forms much more must spirit survive the dissolution of the material forms with which it has been for a while associated.

These are the kind of considerations by which thoughtful men living without the light of revelation might be led to see the reasonableness, the high probability, of a future life. They are not indeed strict demonstrations which compel belief in immortality. To minds of a certain order they would also, it is probable, seem poor and inconclusive. But they have led many a noble soul before now up to the very gates of the church of God. Do not let us think scorn of them as mere philosophy. Do not let us forget that God teaches up to a certain point through reason and nature and conscience, just as he teaches beyond it through his blessed Son. This teaching of nature is presupposed by Christianity. Christianity appeals to it. It is no true service to our Master Jesus Christ to make light of this elementary teaching which God gives us in reason and conscience with a view of heightening the effect of the work of Christ to man. At the same time it is most true that outside the Jewish revelation the immortality of man was not treated by any very large number of men as anything like a certainty. Our Lord Jesus Christ assumed it as certain in all that he said with reference to a future life. And it is his resurrection—the tangible fact of his real survival of the collapse and sharpness of death—which has in this, as in so many other ways, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. What has been we know may be. What has been at least forbids the thought that it could not be, and thus the Christian faith has brought immortality to light through the gospel. Christianity did not create immortality for man. It brought it to light as an ascertained fact of his nature imperfectly apprehended until Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead. Christ, our Lord does not make any one human being immortal any more than he invests any one with reason or with conscience or with will. Immortality like these other gifts is part of the original outfit of our nature, but then our Lord has poured a flood of light upon its meaning and its reality. And what a solemn fact is the immortality of man, dimly apprehended by reason—made certain by revelation. What an unutterably solemn fact that every person in this

congregation will live, must live, in some sense or other, for ever. At this moment each one of us has—or rather is made up of—memory, will, and conscience—each of these altogether his own. A hundred years hence no one of us who are here will be still in the body. Ah, we shall have passed one and all to another sphere of being. We shall exist each one with memory, will and conscience intact, utterly separate each one from any other living being; and ten thousand years hence—or if the imagination can take in such a vast track of time, ten million years hence—it will be still the same: we shall still exist each one with will, memory, conscience intact, separate from all other beings, each in his eternal resting place.

And this brings us to consider what our Lord's words do mean. What is the kind of life which we Christians do, or should, live because Christ our Saviour on his throne in heaven lives it? Clearly, my brethren, something is meant by life in such passages as this which is higher than—which is beyond—mere existence,—not merely beyond animal existence but beyond the existence, the mere existence, of a spiritual being. We English use life in our popular language in this sense of an existence which is not merely dormant, or inert, or unfruitful, but which has a purpose of some sort and which makes the most of itself; and the Greeks had a particular word to describe the true life of man—man's highest spiritual energy—a word to which our Lord either in language or, more probably, by some marked modulation of his voice must have used an equivalent in the Eastern dialect which he actually employed. This is the word employed when our Lord says "*I am the life*," and when St. Paul says "*Christ who is our life*." And thus in the present passage our Lord does not say "*Because I exist ye shall exist also*," but he does say "*Because I live ye shall live also*." This life is existence in its best and its highest aspects—the existence of a being who makes the most of his endowments—who consciously directs them towards their true purpose and object—in whom they are invigorated, raised, transfigured, by the presence of some new power—by the operations of grace. This enrichment and elevation of being is derived—that is the point—from Christ our Lord. He is the author of this new life just as our first parent is the source of our first natural existence. On this account St. Paul calls our Lord the second Adam, implying that he would have a relation towards the human race in some remarkable way resembling that of our first parent, and, in point of fact, Christ is the parent of a race of spiritual men who push human life to its higher—some of them to its highest—capacities of excellence, just as Adam is the parent of a race of natural men who do what they can or may with their natural outfit. "*The second Adam*"—remember that title of our Lord Jesus Christ. As natural human existence is derived from Adam, so spiritual or supernatural life is given to already existing men, from and by our Lord Jesus Christ. "*As we have borne the image of the earthly we must also bear the image of the heavenly*." When our Lord was upon the earth he communicated this life to man by coming in contact with men. What is said of him on one occasion in reference to a particular miracle is true of his whole appearance upon the earth—"Virtue went out of him." A common way of describing this is to say that he produced an impression

deeper and more lasting than has any who has ever worn our human form. Most certainly he did this. He acted, he spoke; and his looks and gestures and bearing were themselves a vivid and most persuasive language; and men observed and listened. They had never seen, they had never heard, anything like it. They felt the contagion of a presence the influence of which they could not measure—a presence from which there radiated a subtle mysterious energy which was gradually taking possession of them, they knew not exactly how, and making them begin to live a new and higher life. What that result was upon four men of very different casts of character we may gather from the reports of the life of Christ which are given us by the four holy evangelists. But at last he died, and rose and disappeared from sight into the heavens, and it is of this aftertime that he says “Because I live ye shall live also.”

How does he now communicate his life when he is out of reach of the senses—when the creative stimulus of his visible presence has been withdrawn?

The answer is, first, by his Spirit. What had been partly visible has now to be a wholly invisible process. The Spirit of Christ—that divine and personal force whereby the mind and nature of our invisible Saviour is poured into the hearts and minds and characters of men—was to be the Lord and giver of this life to the end of time. “He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you.” And, therefore, “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his;” and, therefore, “if any man be in Christ,” through being baptized into this one Spirit, “he is the new creation: old things have passed away and all things have become new.”

And, secondly, the means whereby the Spirit of Christ does especially convey Christ’s life are the Christian sacraments. The sacraments are the guaranteed points of contact with our unseen Saviour—acts in which we may certainly meet him and be invigorated by him as we toil along the road of our earthly pilgrimage. Ah, if those sacraments were only symbols of a grace withheld,—if they were only memorials of an absent Saviour, they would have no legitimate place whatever in a religion like the gospel. They would be on a par with the dead ceremonies of the Jewish law. They would belong appropriately to that old religion of mere types and shadows which, since the coming of our Lord, has given way to a religion in which all is real. Certainly in bestowing on us the life of Christ the divine Spirit is not, as the old phrase has it, “tied to sacraments.” The Spirit of God fills the world and turns persons and words and circumstances to account in his various dealings with the soul of man, but sacraments are chartered means of grace. And—such is our Lord’s appointment—if we mean to live because Christ lives, we cannot do without them. We could do without a mere symbolical washing in water, but “except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.” We could do without bread and wine eaten in memory of an absent Christ, but “except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood ye have no life in you.” And if we cannot understand how rites so simple should convey to us the transcendent blessings and powers which come straight from the very heart of the invisible world, is this wonderful when we understand so little—so very

little—of the lower forms of life around us,—of those simple yet most mysterious processes of nature which surround us on every side? What is life in the animal? What is life in the tree? Why should food support it in the one case or moisture in the other? Our common-place and our scientific answers to these questions only reveal to us a world of mystery, the frontiers of which we seem to know by heart—the real nature of which is utterly beyond us. It is this new life which comes from Christ our Lord which makes it a blessing to have the prospect before us of existing on individually for ever. It is these new thoughts and affections and dispositions which he gives us—which are, in fact, his own—by which an endless existence will be raised to the level of an eternal life. What this life is in its highest form we read in the records of the one life, ideal and yet most real, which was once lived on earth and which is described in the gospels. What it may be we see in those great saints and servants of his who have lived from age to age since his coming and have shown to the world by their patience and their heroism what his grace can make of our poor, frail, fallen, humanity. What it is too often we know in ourselves. We know how vast is the interval between the way in which we think and express ourselves and act, and the actions and language and thoughts which are set before us in the gospels. Why is our Christianity too often so poor and feeble and depressed a thing? Why is it so unequal to its great traditions in the past—to the anticipations which in our higher moments even we can cherish for its future? Before our eyes is the same ideal as that which has shone upon all the generations of Christendom. We have the same hopes and fears—the same warnings and encouragements—as any of Christ's servants in days gone by. May it not be that we modern Christians have largely put out of sight the fact that the true life comes from him, and from him alone, whose name we bear? May it not be that we trust to our own energy or common sense or perception for a power and for results which faith and love must receive, if they are to be received at all, from the pierced hands of an invisible Saviour? “Because I live ye shall live also.” We rely wholly on his death for the pardon of our sins, and we do well. But he has more to give us than this. This is only half of his gospel. If he died for our sins he rose again for our justification. “If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life.”

Let us be up and doing. Let us look to the sources of our true outfit for the eternal world. Let us make the most of them. Our immortality is certain. But what sort of an immortality is it to be? That is a question before which all else that touches ourselves fades away into utter insignificance. That is a question which can be only well and satisfactorily answered by a soul which hastens to draw water from the wells of salvation—which having itself heard the words uttered as of old over the sinner, “Thy sins which are many are forgiven”—still kneels on in persevering love at the feet of the divine Master to receive from him the supplies and the strength which are assuredly needful for the life eternal, and to hear more and more clearly, as the closing scene draws nigh, the divine promise “Because I live thou shalt live also.”

PATIENCE UNDER UNDESERVED WRONG.

A SERMON

BY THE

REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(Canon of St. Paul's,)

PREACHED AT

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 15TH, 1877.

"This is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully." 1 Peter, ii., 19.

The epistle for to-day, it has been suggested, would have been better suited for one of the Sundays before Easter, if not for Good Friday itself. The subject of this epistle is patience under undeserved wrong as illustrated by the example of our suffering and sinless Lord. Such a subject does seem, at first sight, out of keeping with the thoughts and joys of the Easter season; but the truth is that in those early days when, with a few exceptions, our present epistles and gospels were selected, the death and resurrection of Christ were looked upon, as indeed they are treated in holy scripture, as events inseparably connected with each other—as two sides or aspects of a single whole—as the self-sacrifice and triumph involved in one supreme effort of the divine love manifested towards ruined man. And thus it is that, even when Easter has come and gone, these lesser lessons of Good Friday are heard echoing down the weeks which follow the great festival. It seems as though the Church of God felt that she could not at the time learn all that the passion of her Lord was meant to teach her, so she must return to the scene of His sorrow to gather up what had escaped her amid the distractions and bewilderment of the day of His death. Certainly this applies to to-day's services. The collect speaks of Christ as a sacrifice for sin. In the gospel He is the Good Shepherd, laying down His life for the sheep; and here in the epistle He is the Great Sufferer, who, by His sublime endurance, teaches patience—teaches resignation—to those who suffer wrongfully throughout all time.

If we look at the context of this passage in our Bibles, we observe, first of all, that St. Peter is writing, not as the extract appointed for the epistle might suggest, to Christians in general, but to one particular class of Christians—to household slaves. "Slaves," he begins, "be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward; for," he adds, "this is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief suffering wrong-

fully." Our translation "servants" was, perhaps, intended to make the passage practically useful, by suggesting its application to that class among ourselves who have this in common with the ancient slaves—that they have duties to perform to a human master. But in truth the word servant, with all its modern associations, misleads us seriously here as to the apostle's meaning. A servant in an English house has little indeed in common with the slave of that old world society for which St. Peter wrote. A servant is a free man or woman who undertakes to do a certain kind and amount of work in return for a certain stipend. This undertaking is a contract. It may be brought to an end by giving due notice at any moment. It involves, while it lasts, no forfeiture of the protection which the law extends equally to servant and to master. Long before an English servant suffered wrongfully, in the sense contemplated by St. Peter, the law would step in and punish any personal assault, or cruelty, or withholding of covenanted salary on the part of the master, with impartial justice. Far otherwise was it with the ancient slave. He had no rights before the law. He was looked upon, so a great writer of antiquity puts it, as an animate piece of property. He was bought just like the cattle in the homestead or the furniture about the room, if, indeed, he was not born and bred on the estate. He was taught a profession, that he might be useful to his master, or might fetch a high price if he was sent to a sale. He was a poet, a jailor, a cabinet-maker, an architect, a physician, a mechanic, a private attendant, a hair-dresser, a field labourer, an epigrammatist, just as the case might be. He was let out to a friend, or he was sold for a song, or he was flogged to death, or he was crucified, or he was made a pet of, just as the caprice of his owner might dictate. He too had his feelings, his attachments, like the rest of us, but he might be willed away from the associations of a lifetime to a strange owner in a distant home without a suspicion of his destiny; or he might, quite in his old age, pass, at the death of some kind and considerate master to a young heir, selfish and reckless, who viewed him merely as worn-out property, and treated him with indifference and cruelty. Worst of all was the denial to him of those sacred rights which marriage carries with it. He, too, married, yet his wife and children were his only on sufferance, and his family might be broken up at a moment's notice to fill the purse or to gratify the passions of a selfish owner. And all this while the slave was not unfrequently, in everything but his civil position, his master's superior—a man of wider cultivation, of larger capacities, of finer moral make, of nobler sympathies. He might be an Epictetus; he might have those rarer gifts and graces which are wont to win the homage even of the best among mankind. It matters not: he had no rights before the law—no rights against brutal wrong—no claim which would be recognized by public opinion as entitling him to consideration and justice. Not seldom his very superiority was his ruin. It moved the jealousy or it stimulated the caprice of his owner to some exceptional act of cruelty and oppression. Certainly, now and then, the natural conscience of pagan rulers moved them to do something—it was little enough—to improve the condition of the slave. At one

time the old pagan Roman law restrained the right of the master to kill a slave without some assignable cause: at another it pledged him to get an authorization from the magistrate. At a later period—this was when Christianity had made itself felt—it only allowed him to afflict severe bodily punishment. In the same way custom allowed the slave to have a little property. Legally, of course, a man who was himself property could not hold property. And in this way sometimes he would save money to buy his freedom. But all this came to very little. The cruelty and degradation attendant on slavery were gigantic, and it produced, from time to time, wild attempts at resistance, sometimes on a terrific scale, when tens of thousands of armed slaves, under some impatient leader, sought freedom from their oppressors in death on the field of battle, or in victory. In the age of the apostles, no social question was more immediately pressing throughout the Roman empire than this question of slavery.

When, then, the apostles addressed themselves to the conversion of the world, they found at once that they had this question on their hands. Christianity was especially the religion of the suffering and the ill-used, and the slaves became converts in numbers. And as St. Peter thinks over his Jewish flock of converts to Christianity throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, he remembers that multitudes of them were slaves—Christian slaves in pagan households. They have, he reflects, a great claim upon his charity. What should help them to bear the hardships of their lot if the faith and church of Christ does not help them? The apostle scans them over in his thought, smarting, as they were, under a sense of accumulated wrong—crushed down, as they were, beneath an iron system, which looked to themselves, no doubt, and to their masters, so fashioned as if it would last for ever. What can he say to them that will lighten their dreary prison-house,—that will suggest to them the great consecration of unmerited sorrow by the Divine Sufferer, and the hope of a brighter world hereafter? “This,” he will say,—“This is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully.”

St. Peter teaches that suffering is thankworthy, a gift from God, and acceptable in turn to him, if it be accompanied by two conditions. First of all, it must be undeserved. A slave, too, might be punished for doing what would merit punishment in a free man. A slave, too, might be violent, or abusive, or careless about that which belonged to others, or intemperate, or dishonest, or treacherous. If punished for offences of this kind, he might not complain. “What glory is it,” asks St. Peter, “if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?” The law, the eternal law, that punishment follows wrong-doing, is not suspended in the case of the slave. And, secondly, such suffering must be for conscience toward God. It must be borne for God’s cause and sake, and with a good hope of God’s approval. This it is which makes pain at once bearable and bracing, when the conscience of the sufferer can ask the Perfect Moral Being to take note of it, just as David does in so many of his psalms. “Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me.

Lord, be Thou my helper." Mere suffering, which a man dares not offer to God, though it be borne patiently through physical courage, through "pluck," as we term it, has no spiritual value. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." This is the Consecration Prayer, uttered on the cross—uttered, if in other language, wherever men suffer for conscience toward God; and by it suffering is changed—changed assuredly into moral victory.

In short, St. Peter says to the Christian slaves, "If you like you can turn the hardships of your lot into very choice blessings. Suffering is not itself necessarily an evil: it may be a signal good. If it is undeserved, so much the better for its religious efficacy: it is a certificate of honour sent you down from God. Let it be accepted as from Him, and for His sake. It becomes at once a great grace; it is a token of nearer likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ." And St. Paul deals with this question in a similar spirit. He bids the slaves at Ephesus to be obedient to their masters, "not with eye-service, as men pleasers, but as the slaves of Christ." He uses the very same terms in addressing the slaves at Colosse. He desires Titus, as bishop in Crete, to exhort slaves "to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them in all things; not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Writing to Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus, he desires, generally, that slaves should count their masters worthy of all honour, and, in particular, that slaves belonging to Christian masters are not to think the worse of their masters because they are brethren who yet keep slaves; but rather do them service, because they are Christian believers, and objects of the life of God. He advises the Corinthian slaves not to care for the circumstance of slavery, but, if they can be free, to use their opportunity. Everywhere the advice which he gives is substantially this,—submit and obey cheerfully; endure patiently; remember that time is very short; remember that the accidents of this outward condition matter little as compared with our state in eternity.

And here it may be asked, "Why did not the apostles denounce slavery as an intolerable wrong? Why did they trifle with it, and allow the Church which succeeded them to trifle with it? Why did they seem, indirectly at least, to sanction it, by advising slaves to honour and obey their owners? Was not this of the nature of a compromise between good and evil—between the high principles of Christian morality on the one hand, and the debased institutions of heathen life on the other? Would it not have been better to break with slavery at once and altogether,—better for the honour of the Christian revelation, better for the best interest of man?" Certainly, my brethren, nothing can well be more antipathetic than the spirit of the gospel and the spirit of slavery; for slavery postulates an essential distinction between man and man, which is unknown to the gospel. The gospel proclaims the unity of the human race, and the equality of all its members before God. The gospel is based upon, and it consecrates, the laws of God in nature; and slavery, on the other hand, is distinctly unnatural: it is a rejection of the fundamental equality of man. It often, and very consistently, professes to reject belief in the unity of the human race. To

slavery the deepest of all distinctions between human beings is the distinction between the man who is his own owner and the man who is owned by another. "In Christ Jesus," exclaims the apostle, "there is neither bond nor free." But the exact question which the apostles had to consider was not whether slavery was a bad social institution, or theoretically indefensible, but this—whether slavery necessarily ruined the prospects of the human soul. The business of the apostles, you observe, lay rather with the other world than with this—with this world just so far as it bore upon the other. What a man's condition was, or was not, in this world, mattered little in an apostle's judgment, if the man could secure the true end of his being in the world to come. And if this question about the bearing of slavery upon human salvation was raised there could be no doubt about the answer. A slave might be a Christian—he might be the best of Christians—easily enough. If he was harshly treated that was not peculiar to his condition of life: it might even promote his sanctification. If he was tempted to do wrong, St. James would tell him that he should count this all joy, knowing that the trial of his faith worketh endurance. If he had to choose between sinful compliance with a master's will and punishment, though that punishment were death, he, with his eyes fixed on the Divine Sufferer, would know his part. The grace of God may make the soul of man independent of outward circumstances; and there is no real slavery when the soul is free. And it often happens that a Christian slave would live more entirely in and for a better world than other Christians, because, in this world, there was so very little to win the homage of his heart. To the slave-owner, undoubtedly, slavery was more fraught with spiritual danger than to the slave himself; but, however great the temptations of the position, they were, after all, only great temptations. A master of slaves might be just, generous, chaste, charitable, humble, tender-hearted, true. Slavery, then, in Christian eyes, although undoubtedly bad, is not bad in the sense in which a sinful practice is bad,—something in which a Christian can, under any circumstances, keep no terms. It may tend to multiply temptations: it can not compel to actual sin, since sin is only possible when the will consents.

At the same time, although the apostles were working, as I have said, for another world, in the course of doing so, and, as it were, incidentally, they were destined to be, from the nature of the case, great social reformers in this. They could not but detest slavery, but how was it to be done away with? Was it to be by some sudden revolutionary effort, supposing the thing to be possible? Was it to be by the influence of new principles—first upon the opinions of men, and then upon the structure of society? The apostles chose the latter method, but it was a method which took time. The apostles trusted to the infiltration of new principles into the thoughts and actions of men, and not to those violent and tragical catastrophes which, even when they succeed, succeed amid ruins. It was not the duty of the gospel to proclaim a social war. There were sects at that time nearly related to Judaism. The Essenes and Therapeutæ they were called, and their teaching was certainly very familiar to St. Paul—sects which held that the slave

should at once refuse all obedience to his master, in the name of human rights. But slaves, maddened by oppression into rebellion against order, would not, in that age, at least, have put an end to slavery. It was better to teach a higher ideal of life, both to the slave and to the master, and meanwhile to proclaim the truth, "This is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience towards God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully." From the first, brethren, slavery was so changed when in Christian hands as to lose most of its worst features. Christian slave-masters at Ephesus are reminded by St. Paul that they have a Master also in heaven: neither is there respect of persons with Him. The Church was incessantly, after the pattern of the apostle, pleading with Philemon for indulgence towards Onesimus. Already, in her eyes, the slave of the civil law was the great freed man of Christ. In a Christian household, the marriage tie between slaves was respected as being what Christ's law had made it—sacred and indissoluble. In Christian households, a hundred courtesies softened the hardship of the legal relation between master and slave. The sense of a common brotherhood in Christ had already sapped the idea of any radical inequality between them. Did they not both owe their existence to the same creative love? Were they not both redeemed by the same atoning blood? Were they not both sanctified by the same regenerating and purifying Spirit? Did they not kneel side by side to receive the body of their common Lord? Were they not alike striving day by day to deepen the graces of faith, hope, and charity in their souls? Did they not look forward to being together for eternity in a common home in heaven? And thus it happened that Christian slaves sometimes rose even to high places in the ministry of the Church. Callistus, the bishop of Rome, at the beginning of the third century was a slave. Thus it happened that slaves were sometimes martyrs for Christ. Blandina, of Lyons, who died for Christ in the year 177, was a Christian slave girl, and martyrdom, the highest act of moral freedom, of which man is ever capable—martyrdom relieved the degradation of slavery enormously, and reduced it within the church almost to a vanishing point. And then there came the legislation of the Christian councils, and of the Christian emperors. It is welcome on a day like this to remember how, in this great field of human improvement, religion and law went for centuries hand in hand,—religion seeking ever and anon the assistance of law,—law drawing its best inspirations, in such codes as those of Theodosius and Justinian, from the guidance of religion, until at last slavery ceased within the precincts of civilization, though, alas, it has lingered on to our own days as a result of selfish commercial enterprise pursued among the feeble races of mankind.

But then, it may be asked, "Does not the advice of the apostle to submit quietly to wrong destroy manliness and force of character if it is acted on? Does it not tend to create a race of effeminate spiritless men, who may indeed give little trouble to a bad institution or to a bad government, but who have parted with all that can be called moral strength?" The question, my brethren, is, In what does moral strength really consist? It is sometimes taken

for granted that moral strength must catch the eye—must strike upon the ear—must inflict itself obtrusively upon the imagination,—that it must be something bustling, pushing, demonstrative, aggressive,—that it must, at least, have color, body, incident, to recommend it. No, this is not the case. Moral strength may be the exact reverse of all this, and that when it is found in its very finest forms. When it makes no show whatever, and is utterly passive, it is often at its best. Many a man, who can act with great courage in moments of personal danger in a struggle with a brigand, or amid the timbers of a burning house, can not suffer an illness as bravely and as patiently as his little girl. The courage which was shown by the man who, after seeing to the safety of the women and children on board, went down in the Birkenhead was greater than the courage of the men who charged at Balaclava. Animal effort, or the excitement of a great crisis, makes courage easy. The hardest thing very often is to do nothing,—to await the approach of danger or death, and yet not to lose nerve and self-possession. No moral strength in the whole history of our race ever approached that which was displayed on Calvary,—when all that was before Him was present from the first to the mind of the Divine Victim, who, “when He was reviled, reviled not again : when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.”

On the other hand, nothing that has been said, I trust, will be so misconstrued as to be taken to imply that cruelty, tyranny, oppression, are in any sense agreeable to the mind of God. He permits these things among men from time to time, just as He permits much else that is evil, for His own wise ends. He brings good out of them, yet He condemns them, and, by and by, He will punish them. Who can read the Jewish prophets and not mark how one after another they maintain the cause of the helpless, whether against bad Jewish kings or against heathen conquerors? Who can use the psalter—especially the psalms of David himself—without sharing the fire of his moral indignation against oppression and wrong? If St. Peter advises oppressed slaves to endure grief, suffering wrongfully, for conscience towards God, because this is acceptable with God, he does not, therefore, sanction the caprice or the cruelty of the master. Nowhere does the gospel repeal the stern sentence which prophet and psalmist alike uttered against public or private tyrants. “Why boastest thou thyself, thou tyrant, that thou canst do mischief ; whereas the goodness of God endureth yet daily ? Therefore shall God destroy thee for ever. He shall take thee and pluck thee out of thy dwelling, and root thee out of the land of the living.” Nowhere is it implied in the Bible that the systematic oppression of man by man has vested rights in the universe of God, or that circumstances and positions which permit it are even tolerable unless they are perpetuated for very different purposes indeed. The days will come when Englishmen will look back to the abolition of the slave trade by the English Parliament as a higher title to national glory than Trafalgar or Waterloo—perhaps as the very greatest in the course of our civil history. Wilberforce and Clarkson will rank even before those

celebrated commanders to whose courage and genius, under God, we owe the independence of our country. Great days they were when English gentlemen faced every species of insult and unpopularity in pursuit of one noble and disinterested object,—when England, not without long struggling and hesitation, at length deliberately sacrificed her material interest, to the amount of thirty millions of money, that she might secure freedom and well-being to the enslaved races of Africa.

Have there not been symptoms of late, that—I do not say the English people, but some sections of English society have lost something of this generous impatience of cruel wrong—have learnt to listen to the cries of anguish raised by millions of their fellow creatures, and to listen—I will not say unmoved, but without exerting themselves to help them? Be this as it may, the truth announced by St. Peter is always widely applicable in every age and country. Among ourselves there are probably—almost certainly—some who for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. There are no slaves, thank God, on English soil, but there are multitudes of persons in positions of dependence whose lives can easily be made miserable by the cruel ingenuity of their betters, and too often for no worse crime than that of obeying a higher sense of right. Every rank in society has its petty tyrants and its secret confessorships. To suffer wrongfully for conscience towards God is the monopoly of no one class. There is a cadet of a noble family who will not consent to a transaction which he knows to be unjust, and he is cut off with a shilling. Here is an apprentice or a clerk in a large city house who will not abandon the duties and the restraints of the Christian life in deference to pressure, or to abuse, or to ridicule, and he has a hard time of it. Yonder is a governess who has caught a higher vision of life and duty than her wealthy and ostentatious employer, it may be, knows of; or a clergyman, who feels keenly the real character of the revelation of God in Christ, and the tremendous issues of life and death—too keenly far to acquiesce in some popular but shallow misrepresentation of the gospel which makes his people comfortable without bringing them really nearer to God. These, and such as these, must, for conscience's sake towards God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. Law can do but little—almost nothing—for them. The province of law lies outside the spheres of the heart and the conscience. The whole world of inner motive is beyond it. But religion can do much—it can do everything—by pointing to the crucified and risen Prince of that vast company in all ages who, for conscience's sake towards God, have endured grief, suffering wrongfully—by pointing to the unapproached bitterness of His sorrow—by pointing to the completeness and the glory of His triumph.

CHRIST FEASTING WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

A Sermon

By the Rev. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(*Canon of St. Paul's,*)

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 27TH, 1876.

"And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?"—MARK ii., 16.

THE occasion of this question was the presence of our Saviour at the farewell feast in the house of Levi at Capernaum. Levi, or Matthew, as he is generally called, had determined to renounce his profession as a tax-collector, and to devote himself to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, before leaving his old occupation and his old associates, he gave an entertainment—a parting banquet to those with whom he had lived and worked for so many years. The native publicans who farmed the taxes under the Roman officials were a hard set of men, accustomed to acts of cruel extortion, and disposed to think cheaply of human feelings when their rough work had to be done; and yet we may be sure that, on an occasion like this, they were not unmoved when they were going to take leave of one of their own class who had taken what they would have thought so surprising a determination, and who now was with them for the last time. It has been said that there is a soft place in the heart of the worst ruffians, and doubtless, in that gathering at Capernaum, eyes were moist and hearts were tender in deference to those instincts of our common nature which a life of crime and cruelty cannot wholly destroy. Together with the tax-gatherers or publicans were some sinners—persons who, whatever was their occupation in life, are only noticed by the evangelists on account of their bad character. Levi's business, as holding a lease of the taxes under some high official, would have been to extort as large a surplus as he could for himself out of the poor country people; and, in order to do this thoroughly, he would probably have had recourse to the ruffianism of the neighbourhood. These sinners, too, had been his friends; they, too, had a place in his heart now that all was being changed, and that he himself was entering the kingdom of heaven. On them, as on his fellow publicans, he gazed, we may be sure, with a true affection. He could not but hope that, through the divine mercy, it might one day be with them as now with himself; and they, though they were, as

yet, far, far from following him, must have felt the mysterious attraction and pathos of the time—that yearning for higher and better things of which few souls are entirely and always destitute.

But one other was also at that feast, whose presence has made it memorable to the end of time. In all his tender and majestic grace, Jesus Christ was there. Around him was a band of faithful disciples, but around him, too, were those hard publicans—those profligate, those unreclaimed sinners. They sat or they lay all around, marking his gestures, gazing on his countenance, listening to his words. No doubt he had kind and encouraging words for them, too, just as for the poor woman taken in adultery—just as for the Magdalen whose very presence shocked the Pharisees—just as for the thief hanging beside him on the cross. And thus, at the board of Matthew, on that day, the associations of an old life from which he was parting for ever were brought into immediate contact with the privileges and blessings of a new life just opening upon him.

Such frontier posts there are in many a human career—days of critical and lasting consequence, when all that has been and is renounced is, for a moment, close to all that is accepted and is to be. Rare and memorable days are these—days which, from the nature of the case, cannot be repeated—days in which men crowd into the passing moments the feelings and the thoughts of years. Matthew, we may be sure, looked back upon that entertainment with undying interest to his very last hour; or, rather, from his glorious place in bliss, he even now looks back to it as marking the moment of his completed passage from death unto life. And Jesus, we may dare to believe, shed on those poor rude sinners—on that band of disciples—above all on that loving and repentant servant who was now turning to him for ever and in earnest—his own approving smile and blessing. He lit up an occasion which would else have been insignificant, with the beauty of another world.

But near at hand there were others beside the publicans and sinners—beside the divine Master and his band of disciples. These others had not been present at the feast. No instructed scribe, no highly respected Pharisee, would for all the world have broken bread in the company of publicans and sinners; but they were alive—keenly alive—to the influences of the time. They were interested in what was passing: they were looking on at it: they were making their observations. As the company broke up and one by one left the house of Matthew, the scribes and Pharisees advanced to ask a question of the disciples of Jesus, “How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?”

Now, it would seem likely that this question was asked partly in ignorance and partly in ill will.

Partly, I say, in ignorance. Some who asked it would, in all probability, have had a very false and artificial conception of the true character and duties of a religious teacher. They understood Jesus Christ to claim to be in the line of the prophets and John the Baptist, but to claim to be greater than the greatest of his predecessors. They did not ask themselves what had been the practice of the prophets, but only what they should like in a religious teacher of their own day. They wanted a man who, whatever else he was or did, would flatter their prejudices. In their inmost hearts they conceived of him, not as the servant of the truth, but as the servant of the respectable. He was, above all things, to flatter the self-satisfaction of the respectable: he was to denounce sinners at a distance: he was on no account to pollute himself by contact with them: he was to be very careful to stand well with that narrow section of society which claimed in those days to represent all the truth and goodness that was in Palestine. He must not embark in any fanciful schemes for the good of others at the risk

of his own character for respectability. These scribes and Pharisees knew very well what they would have done, had they been in the place of Jesus ; and therefore they asked the disciples, in a spirit of puzzled curiosity, "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners ?"

But the question was also in part suggested by ill will. Some there were among the scribes and Pharisees, even at this date, who had no kindly feelings towards Jesus Christ. They saw in him the successor of John the Baptist : they knew that the Baptist had denounced them as a generation of vipers. An unerring instinct told them that, between the elevation and keen-sightedness of our Lord and their own accustomed ways of dealing with questions of life and duty, there could be no real peace. They had not yet listened to the solemn words which he afterwards uttered against their insincerity, just before his death, when the breach had become irreparable ; but they already knew what his judgment about them would and must be. Accordingly, the instinct of a far-sighted hostility made them quick to detect, if they could, in his life and conduct, any trace of inconsistency, and when they saw him seated at a festive board with men of a discredited occupation—with persons of low and abandoned character, as they no doubt would have expressed it—with the collected depravity of the neighbourhood—they believed that the desired opportunity had come. Was this the successor of the ascetic Baptist whom all counted as a prophet,—who had repeated, in a degenerate age, the stern life of the ancient saint and solitary—Elijah the Tishbite ? Was this mixed rabble the practical commentary on that high standard of conduct which Christ had propounded—on those unsparing censures of others which had fallen from his lips—on that pretension to reconstruct human life on a new basis which was the essence of his teaching—on that claim to found on earth a society which should deserve the name of the kingdom of heaven ? How could all this pretension be reconciled with so intimate an association with the assembled profligacy of eastern Galilee, such as they saw before their eyes ? No, these scribes and Pharisees had felt all along that he was not really what he seemed to be. They felt that they had only to wait long enough, and to keep their eyes open, and they would find him out. Their opportunity had come at last : this was their hour. They had only to call attention to his proceedings in eating with publicans and sinners, and even his disciples could not defend so flagrant an inconsistency. When it was generally known, there would be an end of his influence. It was in a quietly bitter tone of simulated embarrassment—of ill suppressed satisfaction—that this sect of the scribes and Pharisees echoed the question, "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners ?"

Our Lord would not leave to his simple and timid disciples the task of answering his critics. The question fell on his ears, and he interposed to meet it by a rebuke and an explanation.

First of all, he rebuked, with a stern irony, the self-righteousness of the questioners. He assumes that the scribes and Pharisees were really, before God, what they claimed to be before men—morally faultless or whole. Very well, in that case, they, and such as they, did not need his good services. In such society as theirs he could be only in the way. But there were others, as they themselves knew and said, who were not so happily circumstanced—others whom he calls the sick. With them he might be of service. "They that are whole," he said, "need not a physician, but they that are sick." If the scribes and Pharisees were whole, they could not complain of being neglected by one whose assistance they did not need—who was needed by others.

And with this tacit rebuke he explains. He is not, he says, a master of the social courtesies ; he is a physician. A physician. He chooses the noblest

CHRIST FEASTING WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

of all the secular callings—noblest alike in its intellectual elevation, and, as a rule, in its moral disinterestedness—to describe his own work for souls. As a physician, his business was not to admire and congratulate the healthy, but to aid and relieve the sick. He, then, was in his proper place at the feast of Levi, where he was confessedly surrounded by moral disease, owning itself to be such, in all its forms. He had come not to call the righteous—the real or imaginary righteous—but sinners who yearned to escape from sin, to the bliss and strength of a real repentance.

Now, the question which was asked by the scribes and Pharisees is very instructive, for the answer to it illustrates the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in his work and person. It accounts for much in the action of the Christian church which has seemed constantly to require explanation, and it furnishes a practical rule of conduct in a difficult department of duty for individual Christians.

The answer to the question of the scribes and Pharisees set forth the glory of our divine Saviour. Why was he at all at the feast of Matthew? Because he was and is the friend of sinners. "I came to call sinners to repentance." "The friend of sinners." Here, brethren, I say, we have one of the most glorious titles of our Lord and Saviour; not merely because, being such as we are, we naturally fix our eyes upon those qualities in him which meet most directly and consolingly the case of our own fallen and wounded nature; not chiefly because, in ancient words, our wants are the real measure of our enthusiasms; but because God's condescensions reveal his glory even more completely than it is revealed by his magnificence. The magnificence of God is altogether beyond us. By his condescension he places himself within our powers of, in some degree, understanding him. His condescension is the visible measure of his love. The glory of the love of God would never have been brought close to the imaginations and the hearts of men, had his love remained, for the human understanding, only an abstract attribute, instead of a force, as it is, of which man can take some sort of measure at the cradle of Bethlehem, and at the cross of Calvary.

And if men stumble at the condescension of God even more than at his majesty, it is because his condescension reveals more of his nature; it is because brighter light provokes fiercer opposition, where there is opposition at all. Yes, as the friend of sinners, Jesus Christ shows forth more of his eternal splendour than as the King of heaven. The latter is eternal love, but quiescent, inaccessible. The former is eternal love, flashing forth into activity, compelling us, in some sort, to understand, even when we have not yet the grace to worship it. Some centuries ago, there was a great controversy in Christendom as to whether our Lord would have taken our nature upon him if man had never fallen into sin. He would not have died, of course, in that case: that was agreed, because death is sin's penalty, and Christ dies only as bearing, not his own sins, but ours, in his own body on the tree. But would he have appeared in a sinless world, clothed in a human form, to establish a reign which death would not interrupt, or to pass away by an ascension which would contrast with no preceding humiliation or pain? Such a question, of course, could not be really answered. To discuss what would have been, if the world had been other than that which God knew that it would be, even before he created it—from all eternity—might seem to be an irreverent waste of time. And yet this discussion did great good, by bringing out into full and sharp relief the actual end of the incarnation of Christ in a world of sinners. Holy scripture constantly connects our Lord's coming into the world with the salvation of sinners, just as the creed says that, "for us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven." He himself proclaimed that he was come "to seek and to save that which was lost"; that he came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and

CHRIST FEASTING WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

to give his life a ransom for many." His apostle explains that, "because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he, Christ himself, also took part in the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And, therefore, "this is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

"The friend of sinners." He is much else. "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." He is the source of wisdom; he is the source of strength and of sanctity; he is the model of all the perfections; he is the head of principalities and powers. But his glory is greater—greater than that of the sage who enlightens the understanding, but leaves the heart untouched,—greater than that of the master, though he were omnipotent, who crushes wills into submission—who can never command the homage of hearts. Jesus Christ sat down side by side with the outcast and the profligate, precisely because he was incarnate love. If he would win them, he must not keep them at arms' length. He had, by taking flesh, put himself under human conditions of exerting influence; and, of these, voice, look, gesture, the felt presence of affection, of earnest conviction, of disinterested anxiety, are the conditions or the accompaniments. It was as the friend of sinners that Jesus was present at the feast of Levi. It is as the friend of sinners that he haunts the consciences of those who, at this moment, are even defying him,—that he pours into the wounds of the penitent the wine and the oil of his divine consolations,—that he lightens up, with a brightness all their own, the prayers and the lives of those who have wandered even farthest from his fold. This—this is his glory to the end of time. Be thou ruler, O eternal Saviour, even in the midst of thine enemies, by thy invincible love!

And this, the glory of his work, depends upon and illustrates another glory—the glory of his character. How is it that, glowing as he did with human sympathy, he could venture into an atmosphere of crime and pass forth unscathed? How is it that he could take sinners by the hand—nay, fold them to his breast, and yet escape the least contamination? It is because he, and he alone among any who have worn the human form, is sinless. That subtle taint which dulls the intellect, which stains the affections, which warps and enfeebles the will—that selfish aversion from the source and standard of all good, which sometimes expresses itself in high-handed rebellion, and sometimes is lodged in habits of thought and feeling which so bury and disguise it away that it might seem to defy detection—had no place in him. Criticism, the most keen-sighted and hostile, could detect no flaw in his speech and action. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" And his sanctity was not merely externally complete for defensive purposes: it was solid; it was real within. It was a thing, not of outward correspondence with rule, but of inward obedience with principle. In him was no sin. No secret wandering of affection, no insurgent desire, no wanton love of paradox, afforded the enemy an opportunity. Temptations fell on him, thick and importunate, but they glided away from his pure human soul, as arrows from a surface of polished steel. There was nothing within him on which the tempter could fasten; and, accordingly, he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." This was the prerogative glory of his character among men, and it enabled him, like a warrior whom some unseen protecting power guards, in the thick of the fight, from the bullets and the swords that play around him, to plunge, in his boundless charity, into the haunts of sin, "to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide their feet into the way of peace." He could—he can—afford to be the friend of sinners. Purity is fearless where mere

respectability is timid,—where it is frightened at the whisperings of evil tongues,—where it is frightened at the consciousness of inward weakness, if indeed it be only weakness. It was the glory of Christ, as the sinless friend of sinners, which made him eat and drink as he did, to the scandal of the Pharisees, in the house of Levi.

And the answer to the question of the scribes and Pharisees is a comment on the action and history of the church of Christ. Of her, too, the complaint has been made, age after age, by contemporary Pharisaism,—sometimes in ignorance, sometimes in malice,—“How is it that she eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?” There has been much in the history and ways of the Christian church to make the question a natural one. Like her Lord, the church of Christ has entered into the life of sinful humanity. As soon as the first days of persecution were over, and Christianity became the faith of the civilized world, the church sat down with publicans and sinners at the great feast of life, to do what she could for them. She allied herself with the civil power. True, the civil power, even after it had acknowledged the name of Christ, was often enough unchristian, violent, tyrannical, unjust. Still she would do what she could for it; and, if she placed the cross of Christ on the diadem of the Cæsar, it was with the object and in the spirit of her Master's gracious presence at the feast of Capernaum. If government was ever to be penetrated by Christian principles,—if legislation was to be baptized in the name of Christ, the church must not hold aloof. She must do what she could, by her presence, to influence it. And, in the same way, she took part in literature and art. For centuries, these had been, more or less entirely, in the hands of the evil one. The genius, the taste, the imagination of the world had, with some noble exceptions, told simply in the direction of human degradation. The church of Christ set herself down at the feast of literature to purify it, to elevate it, to breathe into it the higher intelligence, the charity, the veracity, the purity, of her Lord. And art, which had for so long been the slave of sense—art was also to be transfigured by her divine companionship. She sat down to feast with its representatives that she might turn their gaze from earth to heaven,—turn it to the super-sensuous and to the ideal; and thus architecture, and sculpture, and painting, and music, and poetry, became her handmaids. She won back these vast districts of human interest and human life from the service of Satan. She bade them guide the imaginations and the hearts of men from earth to heaven. And so in many other departments of human life, on all the occasions when natural feeling makes a feast for friends and neighbours, the Christian church has entered with her kindly presence and blessing, that she might purify and elevate that which, else, might have belonged to a world estranged from God.

Has the church, too, like her Lord, never taken harm in this work of charity? Has it sat down all these centuries with the publicans and sinners, and remained ever the immaculate bride, inaccessible to temptation, undefiled, unscathed? We cannot say it. Between the church and her Lord there is a striking correspondence; there is also a striking difference. Like him, she represents a higher existence amid the things of sense and time. But, while he is sinless, high removed in his awful sanctity above the reach of temptation, the church, though holy by virtue of his presence, is yet made up of sinful human beings who have no absolute insurance against damage from contact with sin; and thus it has often happened that she has suffered from her intimate contact with the life of humanity. The ally of powerful earthly governments, she has sometimes held her peace when she should have pleaded the cause of the poor and needy—the cause of humanity and justice. The patroness of art and literature, she has sometimes seemed, though it were for a moment, to have forgotten those eternal truths which have a first

claim upon her sympathies. She has postponed religious interests to æsthetic finish, or to intellectual brilliancy. The friend of man in all the joys and sorrows of this passing life, she has sometimes thrown herself into the successive phases of his existence in such sort and on such terms as to fail to sanctify them. Her annals abound with names which show that, like Delilah, the world has more than once shorn the locks of Samson, and given him into the hands of the Philistines; and thus, by a natural reaction, her best and holiest sons have sorrowed, with St. Bernard, at being compelled to dwell in Mesech, and to have their habitations among the tents of Kedar. They have longed for the wings of a dove, that they might get them away, far off, and remain in the wilderness. This must be admitted; and yet the lesson to which it points is not that the Christian church should withdraw altogether from the feast of Levi. It is that she should husband and consecrate her forces, by new supplies from heaven, to be really of service there. She dares not leave human life, human thought, literature, government, domestic concerns, to themselves, as if her Lord and Master had not a word to say concerning these. Is she not here to witness for him? Is she not the leaven, of which he himself spake, as put into the three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened? The idea of a hermit church—of a church made up of recluses, such as Donatists—such as some Puritans—have imagined, involves nothing less than a sacrifice of the whole plan of Jesus Christ for the regeneration of the world. Still must the church do what she may for the blessing and improvement of all departments of human activity and life. Duty is no less duty because it is dangerous. Precautions and safeguards are near at hand, but she may not cease to eat and drink with publicans and sinners.

And, lastly, these words are not without suggestiveness as to the duty and conduct of private Christians. On what terms, my brethren, ought a Christian to consort with those who openly deny the truth of religion, or who live in flagrant violation of its precepts? This is one of those practical questions which meet serious men in their daily lives, and there are two dangers to guard against. On the one hand, we must try to keep clear of Pharisaism—that rank weed which so soon springs up in the souls of those who are trying to serve God. The interval between “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are,” is not, practically speaking, a very wide interval, and Pharisaism shows itself by social excommunications—by narrow and ungenerous prejudices—by a tacit assumption of moral superiority, which is only too common among people who are, generally, trying to lead, by God’s grace, Christian lives. On the other hand, we have to guard against an appearance or affectation of indifference to the known will of God, whether in matters of faith or in conduct. To no Christian can it be other than the most solemn of all considerations, whether those around are living conformably to the divine will so far as they know and can. No responsibility can well be greater than that of encouraging others in disobedience to the known will of God. And when this is the plain result of social intercourse, such intercourse becomes at once sinful. St. Paul asked the Corinthians with respect to the effect of intercourse on conduct, “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” And St. John, writing his second epistle to the elect lady and her children, about the effect of social intercourse on faith, says, “He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” These passages, brethren, are not very

popular in the present day, but there they are, in the New Testament. And the question is, How are we to obey them without falling into the sin of Pharisaism? The answer seems to be supplied by our Lord's own example at the feast given by Matthew the publican. What was his motive in being there? He tells us himself. He was there simply as a physician to heal the sick. He was there as a prophet to call sinners to repentance. He did not go only because he was asked, out of easy good humour, and prepared to say nothing that would be unacceptable to the publicans and sinners. He went because he desired to do them good—because he knew that he could do it; and this, allowing for the necessary variations in the situation, should be the Christian's rule. If a Christian sees no opportunity of doing anything for the cause of his Lord, he had better keep away from the feast of Matthew. If the society which invites his presence is brilliant and sceptical, and he knows that he cannot hope even to hold his own with the minds which shape and rule its intellectual tendencies, then he is better away. If it is morally vicious, and he is conscious of weakness of will or secret sympathy with evil, and cannot reasonably hope to stem the impetuous social torrent, then, again, he is better away. It is not charity—it is rashness—it is folly—if, indeed, it be not rather a treacherous indifference to the truth which has come from heaven—to voluntarily expose our own souls to risks which are palpable and overwhelming, when no good can be done for the souls of others. But if he can hope, ever so little, that some good may be done, then no social prejudices—then no class opinion—ought to hold him back. The frontier of Christian intercourse cannot be fixed by our social conventionalisms. Society mutters, "Take care of your character for respectability." A Christian thinks of the presence of Christ at the feast of Matthew. A Christian knows that the difference between men is often much less than it seems to be,—that, when the difference of opportunities is taken into account, it is often, where it seems to be greatest, very insignificant indeed. Who is the Christian, that he should think meanly of such and such a sceptic—of such a profligate, as if, but for God's grace, he would have been any better himself? Nay, may he not have even something to learn from the children of undisciplined nature—natural virtues, generous impulses, stray bits of the will of God which have escaped him, or which he has forgotten? Nature without grace may be—she is—in ruins; but her ruins are often enough beautiful and suggestive.

Great need, indeed, is there of the help of God for those Christians who, in this matter, would really follow in the steps of Christ. We can pretend, my brethren, to no sinless nature; we cannot ensure the loyalty either of our understandings or of our wills to God's truth. But his grace is sufficient for us: his strength is made perfect in our weakness which admits its necessity. The presence of Jesus at the feast of Levi reminds us that all intercourse between one human being and another is solemn,—only less solemn than the intercourse of your soul with the everlasting God. Beneath the fixed social forms—beneath the wonted trivialities—beneath the measured expressions of sympathy and disagreement which govern our social intercourse, there are currents of thought and feeling flowing from soul to soul, for good or for ill, moulding characters this way or that, for an endless future. Nobody who thinks what social intercourse is can doubt this. No one who keeps this in his mind can deny its importance in the view of eternity. Let us endeavour, when we are thrown with others, be they who they may, to think of our Lord Jesus Christ, present, in his majesty and his love, at the feast of Levi, and pray him for his gracious and ready help, that we, too, sinners though we be, may speak a word in season to him that is weary, and may, in this and all else, so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal.

THE INEVITABLENESS OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

A Sermon

By REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(*Canon of St. Paul's,*)

Preached in St. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON

EASTER SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 16th, 1876.

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. Acts ii. 24.

THIS is the language of the first Christian apostle in the first sermon that ever was preached in the church of Christ. St. Peter is accounting for the miraculous gift of languages on the day of Pentecost; and, after observing that it was, after all, only a fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel about the out-pouring of the Spirit in the last days, he proceeds to trace it to its cause. It was the work, he says, of Jesus Christ now ascended into heaven. "He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." But Jesus Christ, he argues, had really ascended into heaven, because he had first really risen from his grave; and it is to St. Peter's way of accounting for Christ's resurrection that I invite your attention to-day, as being the first apostolic statement on the subject that was given to the world.

My brethren, even if this point were only one of antiquarian interest it surely would be full of attractions for every intelligent man to know how the first Christians thought about the chief truths of their faith, considering the influence that that faith has had, and still has on the development of the human race. But, for us Christians, concern in this matter is more exacting and more urgent. Our hopes and fears, our depressions and our enthusiasms, our improvement or our deterioration, are bound up with it. "If Christ be not risen our preaching is vain. Your faith is also vain."

Let us, then, listen to what the apostle St. Peter says about a subject upon which his opportunities—to say nothing of higher credentials—qualified him to speak with authority.

First of all, then, St. Peter states the fact that Christ had risen from the dead. "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death." Let us remember that he is preaching in Jerusalem, the scene of the death and resurrection of Christ, and, as his sermon shows, he is preaching to some who had taken part in the crucifixion. Not more than seven weeks have yet passed since those events—just about the time that has passed since Quinquagesima Sunday; and in Jerusalem, we may be sure, men did not live as fast as they do in a European capital in this age of telegraphs and railroads. An event like the crucifixion, in a town of that size so far removed from the greater centres of human life, would have occupied general attention for a considerable period. It would have been discussed and rediscussed in all its bearings; and all that happened at the time and immediately afterwards—the supposed disappointment of the disciples, the presumed ruin of the cause, as well as the agony and humiliation of the Master—would have been still ordinary topics of conversation in most circles of Jewish society. It was, then, to persons keenly interested in the subject, and who had opportunities at hand of testing the exact truth of what he said, that Peter states, thus calmly and unhesitatingly, the fact of the resurrection. He states it as just as much a truth of history as the crucifixion in which his hearers and themselves had taken part. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of

God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know, him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And then he adds, "whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death." "This Jesus," he adds a little afterwards, "hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." Not one or two favored disciples, but all, even the doubter—all had seen their beloved Master: they had heard the tone of that familiar voice: they had seen the wounds of the passion: they recognized in repeated conversations the continuity of heart, of thought, of purpose. It was the Jesus of old days, only radiant with a new and awful glory. On the very day that he rose he had been seen five times, and "he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs being seen of his disciples forty days and speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." And some twenty-six years later, when St. Paul wrote his first letter to the church of Corinth, there were, he says, more than two hundred and fifty persons still alive who had seen Jesus Christ after his resurrection on a single occasion. The number of witnesses to the fact of the resurrection, to whom St. Peter could appeal, and whom his hearers might cross-question if they liked, will account for the simplicity and confidence of his assertion. In those days men had not yet learned to think more of abstract theories than of well attested facts. The world had not yet heard of that singular state of mind with which we of to-day are not altogether unfamiliar, which holds that some *a priori* doctrine about the nature of things, or, stranger still, about the temper and moods of human thought, is a sufficient reason for refusing to listen to the evidence which may be produced in favor of a fact which interferes with these theories. Nobody, it may be added—nobody who professed to believe in an almighty God—thought it either reverent or reasonable to say that he could not, for sufficient reasons, modify or innovate upon his ordinary rules of working, if he chose to do so.

St. Peter, then, preached the resurrection as a fact, and, as we know, with great and immediate results. But how did he account for the resurrection? What was the reason which he gave for its having happened at all? This is the second point to which I invite your attention, and it will detain us rather longer than the first.

St. Peter, then, says that Christ was raised from the dead because it was not possible that he should be holden of death. Thus you will observe that St. Peter's thought about this matter is the very opposite to that of many persons in our day. They say, in so many words, that no evidence will convince them that Christ has risen, because they hold it to be antecedently impossible that he should rise. St. Peter, on the other hand, almost speaks as if he could dispense with evidence, so certain is he that Jesus Christ must rise. In point of fact, as we know, St. Peter had his own experience to fall back upon. He had seen his risen Master on the day of the resurrection, and often since; but so far was this evidence of his senses from causing him any perplexity, that it only fell in with the anticipations which he had now formed on other and independent grounds. It was not possible, he says, that Christ should be holden or imprisoned by death.

It will do us good, my brethren, as fellow believers with St. Peter, to spend some little time upon his grounds for saying this,—to consider, so far as we may, the reasons for this divine impossibility.

And here, first of all, we find the reason which lay, so to speak, nearest to the conclusion, and it was intended to convince the apostle's hearers in the sermon itself. "It was not possible that Christ should be holden of death; for David speaketh concerning him." It was, then, Jewish prophecy which, if I may say so, forbade the Christ to remain in his grave—which made his resurrection nothing less than a divine necessity. As to the principle of this argument there would have been no controversy between St. Peter and the Jews. The Jews believed in the reality and in the compulsive force of prophecy—of that variety of prophecy which predicts events that are strictly future, just as distinctly

as do Christians. The prophets, in the belief of the Jews, were the confidants of God. God whispered into the ear of their souls by his Spirit his secret resolutions for the coming time. "Surely," could exclaim the prophet Amos,—"Surely the Lord will do nothing but he revealeth his secret to his servants the prophets." And when once God had thus spoken, it was felt by Jews as it is felt by Christians. His word standeth sure, his gifts and calling are without repentance. The prophetic word became, in virtue of the moral attributes of God, a restraint upon that very liberty of God, of which it was the product, until it was fulfilled. It constituted, within the limits of its application, a law of necessity, to which men and events, and, if need were, nature, had to bend. And for all who believed in its author, the supposition that it would come to nothing after all was, to use St. Peter's phrase, "not possible." That word could not return empty. It must accomplish the work for which God had sent it forth, since it bound him to an engagement with those who uttered, and with those who heard, his message. Of course, my brethren, the true drift of a prophecy may easily be mistaken, and God is not responsible for eccentric guesses as to his meaning, in which well intentioned men of lively imagination may possibly indulge. We have lived, in this generation, to hear some very confident guesses based on the supposed meaning of prophecy respecting the end of the world, or some impending general catastrophe. The dates assigned for such occurrences have passed, and religion would be seriously discredited if, indeed, the sacred word itself were at fault, instead of the fervid imagination of some apocalyptic expositor. But where a prediction is clear, it does bind him, who is its real author, to its fulfilment, which in the event, will be recognized as such; and such a prediction of the resurrection of Messiah St. Peter finds in the 16th psalm, where David, as on a greater scale in the 22nd psalm, loses the sense of his own personal circumstances in the impetus and ecstasy of the prophetic spirit which possesses him, and describes a personality of which, indeed, he was the type, but which altogether transcends his own. "Therefore my heart was glad and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is the fulness of joy, and at thy right hand the pleasures for evermore." David, so St. Peter argues, utters these words, but of David himself they are not strictly true. "David," he says, "is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is among us even unto this day." Or, as St. Paul puts it, when appealing to this very psalm in his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, "David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid to his fathers and saw corruption; but he whom God raised up saw no corruption." And the meaning of the psalm was so clear to one school of the Jewish doctors that, unable as they were to reconcile it with the facts of David's history, they invented the fable that his body was miraculously preserved from corruption. David was really speaking at the moment in the person of Messiah, and his language created the necessity that Messiah should rise from the dead; or, as St. Peter puts it, his language made it impossible that the Christ should be holden by death. God had spoken in other passages, no doubt, but especially in this word: his word could not return unto him empty.

Observe, my brethren, that St. Peter had not always felt and thought thus. He had known this 16th psalm all his life; but long after he had followed Jesus Christ about Galilee and Judea he had been ignorant of its true meaning. Only little by little it is that any one of us learns God's full truth and will; and so lately as the morning of the resurrection, St. Matthew says of both St. Peter and St. John that, as yet, they knew not the scripture that Christ must rise again from the dead. Since then, the Holy Spirit had come down. He had poured a flood of light into the mind of his apostles, and over the sacred pages of the Old Testament; and the necessity for the resurrection, which even Jewish expositors might have recognized if they would, became abundantly

plain to them. May that same Spirit teach us, as he taught our spiritual forefathers, the true meaning of his word!

And a second reason which would have shaped St. Peter's language lay in the character of Jesus Christ. It was our Lord's character, not less than his miracles, which drew human hearts to him—which led or forced them to give up all that the world could offer, for the happiness of following and serving him. Now, of our Lord's character, its leading feature, if I may so speak with reverence, was its simple truthfulness. It was morally impossible for him to hold out prospects which would never be realized, or to use words which he did not mean. Nay, he insisted upon simple sincerity of language in those who came into his company. He would not allow the young man to call him "Good Master," when the expression was, in his mouth, a mere phrase. He would not accept pretensions to following him whithersoever he went, or aspirations to sit on his right hand or on his left in his kingdom, till men had weighed their words, and were quite sure that they meant what their words involved. Unless, then, he was like the Pharisees whom he condemned for laying burdens upon others which they would not touch themselves, it might be taken for granted that if he promised he would perform—that his promise made performance morally binding—made non-performance morally impossible. This was the feeling of his disciples about him—that he was too wise to predict the impossible—too sincere to promise what he did not mean. Now, Jesus Christ had, again and again, said that he would be put to a violent death, and that after dying he would rise again. Sometimes, as to the Jews in the temple when he cleansed it in the early days of his ministry, he expressed his meaning in the language of metaphor. "Destroy," he said, "this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews rallied him on the absurdity of undertaking to reconstruct an edifice in three days which had taken forty-six years to build; but the real sense of the words was plain to the disciples by the gesture which had accompanied them. And in later years they understood the full sense in which he termed his human body a temple, namely, because in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

And sometimes he fell back upon ancient Hebrew history, and compared that which was to happen to himself with the miraculous adventure of the prophet who shrank from the mission which God had assigned to him. When the Pharisees, irritated at his stern rebuke of their blasphemous levity in assigning his miracle on the blind and dumb man to the agency of Beelzebub, asked him for a sign—that is, for some credentials of his mission—he contented himself with saying that as Jonah had been three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so the Son of man would be in the heart of the earth. In other words, his right to speak and act as he did would be proved by his rising from the dead. But with his disciples he used neither metaphor nor historical parallel. He said simply, on three occasions at the least, as the hour of his sufferings approached, that he should be crucified and should rise from death. Peter himself had, on the first of these occasions, rebuked him, as we know, and had been rebuked in turn. And thus he was pledged, if we may reverently say so, to this particular act of resurrection. He was pledged to the Jewish people. He was pledged to its rulers and its governing classes. He was pledged, especially, to his own chosen band of followers. He could not have remained in his grave—I will not say without dishonor, but without entailing that revulsion of feeling which is always provoked, and justly provoked, by the exposure of baseless pretensions. It may be, indeed, it has been urged, that the resurrection foretold by Christ was not a literal resurrection of his dead body, but only a recovery of his ascendancy, his credit, his popular authority—obscured as these had been for a while by the tragedy of the crucifixion—in the apprehension of his disciples and of the world. The word "resurrection," according to this supposition, is, in his mouth, a purely metaphorical expression. It is used to describe not anything which affected Jesus Christ himself, but only a revulsion of opinion and feeling about him in the minds of others. Socrates had had to

drink the fatal hemlock, and the body of Socrates had long since mingled with the dust; but Socrates, it might be said, had, in a sense, risen—risen in the intellectual triumphs of his pupils—risen in the enthusiastic admiration of succeeding ages; and the method and the words of Socrates have been preserved for all time in a literature that will never die. If Christ was to be put to death by crucifixion, he would triumph, even after a death so shameful and degrading, as Socrates and others had triumphed before him. To imagine for him an actual exit from his tomb is said to be a literalization natural to uncultivated ages, but impossible when the finer suggestiveness of human language has been felt to transcend the letter. An obvious reply to this explanation is that it arbitrarily makes our Lord use a literal and a metaphorical expression in two successive clauses of a single sentence. He is literal, it seems, when he predicts his crucifixion. There is no doubt on any side about that. The world has agreed with the church as to the fact of his being crucified. Tacitus mentions his death as well as the evangelists. But if he is to be understood literally when he foretells his cross, why is he to become suddenly metaphorical when he foretells his resurrection? Why should not his resurrection, if it be only metaphorical, be preceded by a metaphorical crucifixion, too,—a crucifixion of the thought—a crucifixion of the will—a crucifixion of his reputation—not the literal nailing of his human body to a wooden cross? Why does this fastidious spiritualism, if it be such, which shrinks from the idea of a literal rising out of a literal grave, not shrink equally from a literal nailing to a literal cross? It is impossible, my brethren, seriously to maintain, on any grounds that can be accepted by an honest interpretation of language, that our Lord himself could have meant that he would be literally crucified, but would only rise in a metaphorical sense. He meant that the one event would be just as much, or just as little, a matter of fact as the others, and any other construction of his words would never have originated except with those who wish to combine some sort of faint, lingering respect for the language of the Master, with a total disbelief in the supreme miracle which has made him what he is to Christendom. No, it must be said if Jesus Christ had not risen from the grave, he would not have kept his engagements with his disciples, or with the world. This was the feeling of the men who knew and who loved him best. This was the feeling of St. Peter, ripened, no doubt, only lately into a sharply defined conviction, but based on years of intimate companionship—that after he, so scrupulously truthful, so invariably wise, had once said that he would rise from death, any other event was simply impossible. All was really staked thus on his really rising again, and when he did rise, he was declared, as his apostle said, to be the Son of God with power, in respect of his higher eternal nature by this resurrection from the dead. Those who cling to his human character, and yet deny his resurrection, would do well to consider that they must choose between their moral enthusiasm on the one hand, and their unbelief on the other; since it is the character of Christ which, even more than the language of prophecy, made the idea that he would not rise after death so impossible to his first disciples.

Nor have we yet exhausted St. Peter's reasons for this remarkable expression.

You will remember, my brethren, that in the sermon which St. Peter preached to a crowd shortly after this, after the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, he went over a great deal of the same ground as that which he had traversed in this his first sermon on the day of Pentecost. He told his hearers, among other things, that they had killed the Prince of life, whom God had raised from the dead. Remark, brethren, that title—the Prince of life. Not merely does it show how high above all earthly royalties was the crucified Saviour in the heart and faith of his apostle: it connects the thought of St. Peter in this, the earliest stage of his ministry, with the language of his divine Master, on the one side, and that of the apostles Paul and John upon the other. Our Lord had said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He had explained the sense of this last word, "life," by saying that

as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. He had complained to the men of his time, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" and St. John had said of him that in him was life; and St. Paul, as in to-day's epistle, calls him "Christ who is our life." When, then, St. Peter names him the Prince of Life, he is referring to this same truth of his Master, and it is, in fact, the key-note of the gospel. That "What is life?" is a question which, even at this date of the world's history, no man can really answer. We do not know what life is in itself. We can only register its symptoms. We see growth, and we see movement, and we say, "Here is life." It exists in one degree in the tree; in a higher degree in the animal; in a higher degree still in man. In beings above man, we can not doubt, it is to be found on a still grander scale; but in all these cases, be it what it may, it is a gift from another, and having been given, it might be modified or withdrawn. Who is he in whom life resides originally?—he who owes it to no patron—he from whom no other being can conceivably take it? Only he, the self-existent, lives of right—lives because he can not but live—lives an original as distinct from a derived life. This is true of the eternal three who yet are one, but the Christian revelation assures us that it is only true of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, because, by an unbegotten and unending communication of deity, they receive such life from the eternal Father. And hence our Lord says, "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Not merely life, let me repeat it, but life *in himself*. He is thus to be equal with the eternal Giver, Fountain and Source of life; nay, rather, he is to be, with reference to all created beings, the life—their Creator, their Upholder, their last end. For, says St. Paul, "By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Thus, then, this is the full sense of St. Peter's expression—the Prince of life.

And in the truth which it teaches as to our Lord's jurisdiction over life, based on the truth of his eternal nature, we may trace a third reason for St. Peter's expression in the text. How could the very Lord and source of life be subdued by death? If, for reasons of wisdom and mercy, he subjected the nature which he had made his own to the king of terrors it was surely not in the course of nature: it was a violence to nature that this should be. And, therefore, when the object had been achieved he would rise, St. Peter implies, by an inevitable rebound: he would rise by the force of things: he would rise by the inherent energy of his irrepressible life. The real wonder, from St. Peter's point of view, would be if such a being as Christ were not to rise. The pains of death were loosed, not in an extraordinary effort as in your case or mine, but because it was impossible that he, the Prince of life, should be holden of it.

Observe, brethren, before we leave this point, how St. Peter deals with the subject. He looks at it, if I may so speak, from above rather than from below. He asks himself what his existing faith about the Son of God points to, rather than what history proves to have taken place. He is, for the moment, more concerned for the honor of his Master than for the value and significance of his acts for us. To St. Peter it is less strange that there should be an innovation upon nature, like the resurrection of a dead body, than it would be if a being like Jesus Christ, having been put to death, did not rise. St. Peter is very far from being indifferent to the proof of the fact that he did rise. He often insists upon this proof, but just as St. John calls Christ's miracles his works, meaning by that that they were just what such a being might be expected to perform, so St. Peter treats his resurrection from the dead as perfectly natural to him—as an event which any man or angel, with sufficient knowledge, might have calculated beforehand, just as astronomers predict unerringly the movements of the heavenly bodies. "God hath raised Jesus from the dead," he says, "because it was impossible that death

should continue to hold him." The buried Christ could not remain in his grave. He was raised from it in virtue of a divine necessity, and this necessity, while in its original form it is strictly proper to his case, points to kindred necessities which affect his servants and his church.

Let us, in conclusion, briefly consider them.

See, first, the impossibility for us Christians, too, of being buried for ever in the tomb in which we shall be laid at death. We, too, shall rise: we must rise. In this, as in other matters, as he is so are we in this world. To us as to him, although in a different way, God has pledged himself. There is a difference, indeed, such as might be expected, between our case and his. In him an eternal vital force beside the voice of prophecy made resurrection from the dead necessary. In us there is no such intrinsic force—only a powerful guarantee to us from without. He could say of the temple of his body, "I will raise it up in three days." We can only say that God will raise us up, we know not when. But this we do know—that "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us." This we do know—that "we all must be manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The law of justice and the law of love combine to create a necessity which requires a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust.

See, too, here the principle of the many resurrections in the church of Christ. As with the bodies of the faithful, so it is with the body of the Redeemer. The church of Christ is, as St. Paul says, Christ himself in history. He says as much when he tells us that as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body being many are one body, so also is Christ. The church is Christ's body—the fulness of him that filleth all in all. But the force of this language is limited by the fact, equally warranted by scripture, that the church has in it a sinful element—a human element which, unlike the humanity of Christ, is weak and sinful. The church of Corinth itself, to which St. Paul wrote the glowing sentence which I have just quoted, was filled, he tells us, with strife, irreverence—worse sins than these. Hence the church of Christ has, again and again, in the course of her history, seemed to be dead and buried outright—buried away in some one of the lumber rooms of the past; and the world has gone its way rejoicing, as if all was over—as if, henceforth, unbelief and ungodliness would never be disturbed in their reign on earth by protests from heaven. But suddenly the tomb has opened. There has been a profound agitation in men's consciences—a moral movement—a feeling that all is far from right; and then a new uprising of the spirit of devotion—a social stir—literary, missionary, philanthropic activity—conspicuous self-sacrifice, and the world awakes one fine morning to an uneasy suspicion that John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that mighty works do show forth themselves in him. The truth is that the Christ himself has again burst his tomb and is abroad among men. So it was after the deep degradation of the papacy in the tenth century. So it was after the accumulated corruptions of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. So it was in this country after the great triumph of misbelief and profanity in the middle of the seventeenth century; and, later after that indifference to all true religion during the greater part of the eighteenth. The oppression, the degradation, the enfeeblement of the church of Christ is possible enough. Too generally, the world only binds and makes sport of Samson, because Samson has first yielded to the blandishments of Delilah. But there is a vital force in the church of Christ which asserts, and must assert, itself from generation to generation. If the crucifixion is re-enacted in the holy body—if, as St. Paul phrases it, we fill up from century to century that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, the resurrection is re-enacted, too. It is not possible that the body of Christ, instinct with his force and with his vital and quickening Spirit, should be permanently holden down by death. Each apparent failure and collapse is followed assuredly by an

outburst of energy and moral glory which reveals the presence of the living Christ—his presence, who, if crucified through weakness, yet lives by the power of God.

And we have here, lastly, what should be the governing principle of our own personal lives. If we have been laid in the tomb of sin, it ought to be impossible that we should be holden of it. I say "ought to be," because, as a matter of fact, it is not impossible. God only is responsible for the resurrection of his Son,—for the resurrection of the Christian's body,—for the perpetuity through its successive resurrections of the Christian church: and therefore, it is impossible that either one or the other of these should permanently succumb to the empire of death. But God who raises our bodies, whether we will or not, does not raise our souls from sin without our corresponding with his grace; and it is quite in our power to refuse this necessary correspondence. That we should rise, then, from sin is a moral—it is not a physical—necessity; but, surely, we ought to make it as real a necessity as if it were physical. For any man who feels in his soul the greatness and the love of Jesus Christ, it ought to be morally impossible to remain in this tomb. "Like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." If Lent is the time for mourning the past, Easter is the time for bracing, definite resolutions—for vigorous efforts which shall control the future. If we were unaided and alone, such efforts and resolutions would be failures, in that they would be like the vain flutterings of a bird against the wires of the cage which imprisons it. But he who has broken the gates of brass and smitten the bars of iron in sunder will not fail us if we seek his strength, and the permanence and the splendour of his life in glory may, and should be, the warrant of our own.

One word more. A real resurrection with Christ will make and leave some definite mark upon our life. Let us resolve this day, brethren, to do, or to leave undone, henceforth, some one thing which will make the needful difference. Conscience will instruct us in this matter if we ask it, and if any of you are looking out for a way of showing gratitude to our risen Redeemer, I would suggest that you should send the best contribution you can afford to the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in support of the mission at Zanzibar on the east coast of Africa. There, a small band of noble men, under the leadership of a bishop of apostolic life, are making efforts, worthy of the best days of the church, to propagate the faith among races to whom no depths of degradation and misery, that are possible for human beings, are practically unknown, but races which are as capable as ourselves of rising with Christ to a new life of moral and mental glory. According to the accounts which have reached this country quite recently, just at the moment when new and unlooked-for opportunities are presenting themselves to the servants of Christ, and a real inroad upon heathendom and upon slavery and the vices which mark its empire is possible as it has never been possible before since the mission began, their scanty means altogether failed them. They literally have not enough to eat, much less to attempt new enterprises of Christian charity such as the circumstances imperatively demand. Shall we leave them to dependency, to retreat, to failure, with the heathen before them stretching out their hands, almost within sight of the cross of their Redeemer, and their God, with the impure imposture of the false prophet hard by, ready to take advantage of our supineness? Surely, it can not but be that some who hear me will make an effort worthy of Easter gratitude. There will be no collection after the service, but, as I have said, I am sure that the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel will gladly receive subscriptions for an object than which nothing more truly Christian and philanthropic—nothing more worthy of men who humbly hope that they have their part in the first resurrection, and in its divine necessities, can well be imagined.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.,

(*Canon of St. Paul's,*)

PREACHED IN

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

ON

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 14th, 1872.

London: F. DAVIS, (late J. PAUL), 1, Chapter House Court, North
Side of St. Paul's; and Paternoster Row.

Sermon.

“I am the Good Shepherd.”—JOHN x. 11.

FEW gospels, if any, which are appointed during the whole course of the church year speak to us more directly, more persuasively, than this. “The Sunday of the Good Shepherd,” as in many parts of Christendom this day has been called, has, or ought to have, a charm for us, the sheep of His pasture, almost, if not altogether, unrivalled.

Now, if you look at your New Testaments, you will see that in the first eighteen verses of the 10th chapter of St. John, there are three distinct allegories. First comes the allegory of the shepherd, next the allegory of the door, lastly the allegory of the good, or, as it may be rendered, the beautiful, the ideal, shepherd. These, I say, are allegories rather than parables. An allegory differs from a parable just as a transparency might differ from a painting on canvas. In the parable the narrative has a body and a substance (so to call it) of its own. It has a value which is independent of its application—of its interpretation. It often will lend itself quite naturally to more interpretations than one. In the allegory, the narrative suggests the one obvious interpretation step by step. The two are, under the circumstances, inseparable. It is impossible to look steadily at the picture presented to the mind’s eye by the allegory, without perceiving the real persons and events which it refers to, moving almost without disguise, without mistake, behind. This might have been observed in the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, which St. Paul has been interpreting for us at the beginning of the second lesson of this afternoon’s service, and it will appear in the present case as we proceed.

In order to understand these three allegories, we must remind ourselves that in the east a sheepfold is not a covered building, but a simple enclosure, of some considerable extent, surrounded by a wall or palisade. Within this enclosure, many flocks of sheep which have wandered far away during the day, under the care of a shepherd, are collected. The shepherds lead them to the enclosure at nightfall; and during the night a single shepherd, here called the porter, keeps the gate and guarantees the safety of the collected flock. In the morning the various shepherds return to the fold to claim their respective flocks at the hand of the night porter. They knock at the gate of the enclosure and he lets them in; and then, each for himself, the shepherds separate their own flocks from the others with which, during the night, they have been intermixed, and each shepherd leads his sheep forth to the day’s pasturage. If a robber wishes to enter the fold, he does not attempt the door, where he knows that he will be recognized and detected: he climbs over some other part of the enclosure. He comes for no good purpose: he comes to kill and to destroy.

Now, our Lord’s three allegories place us here face to face with the pastoral life of the East at three different periods of the Eastern day. In the first, the allegory of the shepherd, it is still the freshness of the early morning. The dew is on the ground: the shepherds are returning to the fold to claim the flocks which have been collected within it during the night; and if a robber is endeavouring to lead away some of the sheep, he must find his way into the fold through

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

some dishonourable trick. The porter will open the gate only to the regular shepherd. The shepherd calls his own sheep by name, and they hear his voice, and then he leads them forth from the fold. He does not drive; he walks before them. They follow him because they know him—because they trust him.

The second allegory, that of the door, places us in the full noontide of the Eastern day. The fold, which is here implied without being mentioned, is not the same fold as that in which the sheep were collected during the night. It is a day enclosure to which, during the hours of the burning sunshine, the sheep may retire for rest, for shade, and out of which they may at will wander to seek pasture. In this allegory, observe, there is no mention of a shepherd at all. The shepherd has for the moment disappeared. The most important feature is the door, in this picture of the mid-day fold. The door of this fold is the guarantee of safety and of liberty to the sheep. "I am the door," says the Divine Speaker. "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved; he shall go in and out and find pasture."

In the third allegory, that of the good shepherd, we have reached the evening-tide. Already the shadows are lengthening upon the hills, and the shepherds have collected their flocks to lead them back to the night enclosure. As the darkness gathers, the flock is attacked by wolves which lie in ambush for it on the way. The good shepherd, who loves his sheep with nothing less than a personal affection, throws himself between his imperiled flock and their cruel enemy, and in doing so he sacrifices himself. "He giveth his life for the sheep." Now, this allegory of the good, or beautiful, or ideal shepherd is no mere repetition of the first allegory of the shepherd, although they both refer to one person and to one only; for the shepherd who knocks at the door in the early morning, is contrasted with the thief and the robber who climbs into the fold some other way; and the good shepherd who gives his life for his flock at nightfall is contrasted with the hireling or mercenary who flies at the approach of the wolf, and sacrifices his flock to his personal safety.

If we ask ourselves the question, what would our Lord's hearers have understood—what would they have been meant, in the first instance, to understand—by this language of His? we must look for an answer in what was actually going on at the time in Judea before the very eye of the speaker. When Our Lord spoke of a fold, every religious Jew would think at once of the commonwealth or church or nation of Israel. In the pastoral language of the prophets the old theocratic nation was the fold of the Lord Jehovah. And when our Lord spoke of a shepherd, every religious Jew would think of one and one only being, the expected Messiah. In such a Psalm as the 23rd, for instance, David applies the figure to the Lord Jehovah. "The Lord is my shepherd; therefore shall I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort." And Jehovah is announced as destined to appear once more to His people as the shepherd of Israel, in both Ezekiel and Zechariah. In Zechariah especially, the shepherd of Israel is represented as making one last effort to rescue the sacred flock from slaughter. He only attaches to himself the poorest of the flock, and after a month's toil he receives thirty pieces of silver,—that is, the wages of a labourer of the very lowest class,—as he breaks his staff and leaves to the bad shepherds the flock that will not be saved. The whole of this instructive but difficult passage was, we may reverently conjecture, especially before the mind of our Divine Lord when He was pronouncing these very

allegories. He was Himself, in His own thought, the very shepherd of prophecy who had come to the gate of the Jewish commonwealth to find out His believing sheep among the unbelieving masses, and to lead them forth from it. But who was the porter? Among various explanations there is one answer, we may dare to say, which would have occurred at once to those who heard our Lord speak, to those who knew the history of the time,—an answer which cannot but occur to any of us who has carefully studied St. John's Gospel. John the Baptist is the porter. It was to the Baptist, the last, the greatest, of the prophets, keeping in the wilderness the gate of God's ancient fold, that Christ came at the beginning of His ministry,—came as the gospel morning was breaking on the earth. It was from among the Baptist's followers that Christ received his very first disciples. John the Baptist bare Him witness,—this is the burden of each and of all the references to the Baptist in the last of the gospels. And who were the thieves and robbers who had not come into the fold through the gate? We cannot doubt that they were the Pharisees—the Pharisees who had established among the Jewish people their great authority by much hypocrisy, by much violence. They had not entered by the gate. Their influence was not based on the old law of Moses: it was based on bad traditions which had grown up around that law, and which they themselves especially had fostered. And the Baptist, when he encountered them, as St. Matthew tells us, had not kept any sort of terms with them. They were, he said, a generation of vipers, whom he warned to flee from the wrath to come—to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

The whole scene of the first allegory is laid at the commencement of Christ's ministry. In the second allegory Christ has led out His own from the old Jewish fold into the pastures of the new kingdom. There is no shepherd mentioned here. Christ is the door. The new fold of which He is the door is the gospel enclosure in which His person is everything. Through Him the sheep go forth for pasture; through Him they retire within for safety. Here again He contrasts Himself with the Pharisees as thieves and robbers. The image of the door melts away in His language, as it melts away in the thought of His listeners, into His own actual person. And in the third allegory, the last days of His ministry—the days which were then actually passing when He was uttering the words—are before Him. The evening of His earthly life is upon Him. He is near His Passion. The wolf is already lying in ambush for the flock. The hireling shepherd flees, true to his nature. The good shepherd gives his life. Who is the wolf here? As always, the Pharisee party which preyed upon the religious life of the people. And who is the hireling? Certainly not, as some have supposed, the Pharisees against whom the hireling is the natural defender. By the hireling, our Lord's hearers would have understood the Jewish priesthood. It is a mistake to suppose that the interests and views of the Pharisees and the priesthood were identical. The Pharisees were, to a very great extent, a lay sect. They had obtained a preponderating influence over the religious life of the people, and had corrupted it very seriously. The priesthood ought to have held the Pharisees in check. They would have done so had they done their duty. The priesthood were not indisposed to believe in our Lord. In St. Stephen's day, we are told, a great multitude of the priests were "obedient to the faith;" and even before the Passion, many of the chief priests believed in Him, "but because of the Pharisees they would not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." The fact was that the priests did not dare to face the Pharisees, and Jesus was the victim of Pharisaic indignation. It was already plain

what would—what *must*—follow. Our Lord, of course, knew it in other ways, but a purely human observer of the forces which were then governing the political life of Judea might have understood the meaning of the words—“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

When our Lord calls Himself the good shepherd, is He using a title which has lost its value since He has ceased to live visibly upon the earth; or has this title a true meaning for us Christians,—for you, for me, at the present day?

Here we cannot but observe that, writing some forty years after the ascension, St. Peter, in to-day's epistle, calls Jesus Christ the shepherd as well as the bishop of souls: and St. Paul calls Him the great shepherd of the sheep. And the earliest ages of the Christian church, when the cruel stress of persecution drove the faithful from the streets and public places of Rome down into those catacombs which were burrowed out beneath the busy life of the vast pagan city, there was one figure above all others, which, in the depths of their dark prison homes, Christians delighted to draw in rude outline upon the vaults beneath which they prayed. It was the figure of the good shepherd. Sometimes His apostles were ranged on either side of Him; sometimes—the allegory being more clearly adhered to—the sheep were standing around with upturned faces, eagerly intent upon their deliverer, their guide: sometimes, as in later art more especially, He was carrying a wanderer on His shoulder, or folding a lamb into His bosom, or gently leading the sick, the weary, of the flock. There was that in the gracious figure which represented the tenderness, the active love, of the Divine Saviour, moving, although unseen—moving most really—amid His persecuted flock to help and to bless them. And ever since those days of persecution, when Christ has been asked to bless from His throne some work of mercy for relieving suffering, or for teaching the ignorant, or for delivering the captive, or for raising the fallen, it has been as the great shepherd of Christians—the good shepherd of humanity. The title has an attractive power for the Christian heart, which is all its own. Not that it is by any means easy to enter into the full force of this beautiful image. To do so we must know something really about ourselves; we must know something really about the person of our Saviour. We must feel first of all, our weakness, our dependence, our need of a heavenly guide and friend. We must sincerely feel that, face to face with the eternal world, and with its awful monarch, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, is, at the very best, a great mistake. An old pagan Roman did not—could not—feel this; and, therefore, in his unconverted state, he spurned the idea of having a good shepherd in heaven, whom it was his business to love and to worship. It was humiliating to him—it was intolerable—that he, with the blood of the Scipios and the Cæsars in his veins, should think, should speak, of himself as a sheep. To him the Christians who could do so appeared a set of poor-spirited, degraded, contemptible people, who had never known what it was to have a part in the majesty of the Roman name. What did he want of a shepherd in the skies? He depended on himself; he trusted himself; and if life became intolerable, and he was a stoic in opinion, he probably meant quite deliberately to put an end to himself. That he should be led, pastured, folded, guarded, delivered,—all this was simply out of the question. He, he did not want to be placed under a sense of obligation to any one, least of all under a sense of obligation so immense, so utterly beyond discharge as this. Certainly, he might have reflected that he owed the very gift of existence itself to some higher being, however little he knew of that being, and that this alone was a debt that he could never repay. But how many of us, my Christian brethren, go through our lives without ever,

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

or, at least, without often, thinking seriously of what it is to be created beings,—of what it is to have a being whom we name our creator—a being to whose free bounty, all we are, all that we have, moment by moment, is literally due. What wonder, then, if the old pagan Roman did not enter—what wonder if some of us do not enter—into the blessedness of devotion to the good shepherd. Until a man's heart is broken by a sense of personal sin, and by the love of God revealed to the soul in all His beauty and in all His justice, the figure of the good shepherd must be simply repulsive, because it inflicts upon the man the sense of an immeasurable personal humiliation.

And, besides this, to enter into what is meant by the good shepherd, we must know and believe the truth about the person of Jesus. If Jesus Christ was merely a man, how could He, in any rational sense, be a good shepherd to you and to me? It is now eighteen centuries and a half since He left this planet, and if we only think of Him as a departed saint resting somewhere in the bosom of God, we have no reason whatever to attribute to Him a pastoral interest in the multitudes of Christians who look up to Him day by day, hour by hour, as He sits upon His throne, for health and for guidance. Can we suppose that any merely created being could be thus a superintending providence—could have thus an all-contemplating, all-comprising love to multitudes? And yet when our Lord says, "I am the Good Shepherd," He clearly disengages Himself from the historical incidents, from the political circumstances, which immediately surround Him. He places Himself above all the narrowing conditions of time. He will be to all the ages what He is already to the faithful few in and about Jerusalem. It is as when He says, "I am the life;" or, "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" or, "I am the resurrection and the life;" or, "I am the true vine." All this language in the mouth of a merely human teacher would be pretentious; it would be inflated; it would be insufferable. We cannot conceive the best man whom we have known in life permitting himself to speak of himself as the good shepherd of men. To do so would be to forfeit his claims to our love, to our reverence, to our respect. Why is it not so when our Lord speaks? Because there is that in Him beyond, yet inseparable from His perfect manhood, which justifies His language,—which makes it not pretentious, not inflated, not absurd, not blasphemous in Him, but, on the contrary, perfectly natural and obvious. We feel, in short, that He is divine, and that such sayings as "Before Abraham was I am"—"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"—"I and the Father are one," are in the background of His thought, and explain and justify what He says about Himself as being the shepherd of human souls. But it is because He is also man, that such a title especially befits Him. Because He is, though abstract providence, but a divine person who has taken part in our frail human nature, and who, through it, communicates with and blesses us, He is the good shepherd of His people.

Let us very briefly reflect what this truth involves as to our relations with our Redeemer.

As the good shepherd He knows His sheep. He knows us; He knows us individually: He knows all about us. He knows us not merely as we seem to be, but as we are. Others look us in the face day by day, and we them. They touch the surface of our real life: perhaps they see a little way below the surface; but "what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in Him?" What do they know of that which passes in the inmost sanctuary of the reason, of the

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

conscience, of the heart? Nay, do they know much of our outward circumstances, of our trials, of our struggles, of our difficulties, or of what we deem such? Citizens as we are of this vast metropolis, we live amid a multitude, yet we live in solitude. But there is one Being who knows all,—upon whom nothing that passes is lost,—to whom nothing that effects us ever so remotely is matter of indifference. To Him “all hearts are open, all desires known; from Him no secrets are hid;” and all the warps of our self-love, all the depths and corruptions of our hearts, all that we might have been, all that we are, is spread out before His eyes like a map, to which each moment that passes adds a something which He has already anticipated—adds it in the way of extent without diminishing anything in the way of clearness. It is because He knows us thus perfectly, that He is able to help us, to guide us, to feed us,—if we will, to save us, aye, to the very uttermost.

And besides this knowledge, He, the Good Shepherd, has a perfect sympathy with each of us. He is not a hard guardian who sets Himself to keep us in order without any sort of feeling for our individual difficulties. He is touched, as His apostle says of Him, with a feeling of our infirmities. His true human nature is the seat and the warrant of this His pure human sympathy to which the image of a shepherd, if it were taken alone, does something less than perfect justice. Nothing that effects any one of us is a matter of indifference to His tender heart. He is not interested merely or chiefly in the noble or the wealthy, or the intellectual, or the well-bred. Wherever there is a human soul seeking the truth—a human heart longing, however unskilfully it may endeavour, to lavish its affection upon the eternal beauty—there He is at hand, unseen yet energetic, entering with a perfect sympathy into every trial,—anticipating, in ways we little dream of, every danger; not, indeed, suspending our probation by putting us out of the reach of temptation, but “with the temptation also making a way to escape that we may be able to bear it.” And yet this sympathy is not a burst of unregulated affection. It is guided by a perfect prudence; it is guided by the highest reason. In the days of His earthly life this was especially observable. He dealt with men according to their characters, according to their capacities. He did not put the new cloth on the old garment, or the new wine into the old bottles. He did not ask His disciples to imitate the austere life of the followers of the Baptist. He knew them too well. They would come to that, He said, by and by. He did not all at once unfold to them all the truth He had to tell them about Himself, about His kingdom, about the means of living the new, the divine, life. These truths would have shocked them had they been prematurely announced. “I have many things to say unto you,” He said, “but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when the Spirit of truth is come He shall guide you into all truth.” Those who were yet in the infancy of the Christian life He, in His tenderness, would feed with milk. He reserved strong meat for those who knew more—who could bear more. So it has been since. If we, brethren, have enjoyed opportunities,—if we have been denied them,—this (believe it) has not happened by chance. The Great Shepherd of the sheep, who knows us, has ordered it. He has proportioned our duties, our trials, our advantages, our drawbacks, to our real needs, to our real capacities, to our inmost characters. We may have disputed His wisdom,—we may have made the most of it,—but it is not less certainly a characteristic of His government. “As thy days so shall thy strength be,”—so runs His most gracious promise.

And above all, as the Good Shepherd, the Christ, He is disinterested. He gains nothing by watching, by guarding, by feeding such as us. He seeks not ours but us. We can contribute nothing to His majestic glory. He

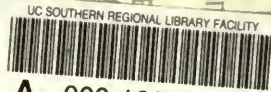
THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

seeks us for our own sakes, not for His. He spent His earthly life among the villages, among the hamlets, of a remote province, when He might have illuminated and awed the intellectual centres of the world. He spared Himself no privations in His toil for souls. He had at times no leisure so much as to eat, so absorbing were His labours. Persecutions, humiliations, rebuffs, sufferings,—these could not diminish the ardour of His sacred, of His consuming zeal, and He crowned all by embracing with the utmost freedom, when He might have declined it, an agonizing death in order to save His flock. He gave His life for the sheep: He gave it once for all, eighteen centuries ago, but His death is just as powerful to deliver us from the onset of the wolf as it was then. Self-sacrifice such as that on Calvary does not lose its virtue with the lapse of years. The precious blood is as powerful to save us as when, warm and fresh, it first ebbed forth from the wounds of the Crucified, for it is, as the apostle says, the blood of the everlasting covenant, and the Good Shepherd of the sheep has been raised from the dead that it may plead for us perpetually on earth and in the courts of heaven.

Ah! we look up to Him upon His throne, and here in His courts we sing day by day that we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Do you mean that? We kneel day by day, and confess that we have erred and strayed from His ways—from the eternal Father's ways—like lost sheep. Do you mean that? If we do, have we yet returned with anything like sincerity to the shepherd and bishop of our souls? If we do, are we endeavouring to know Him as, whether we will or not, He certainly knows us. We need a guide through the uncertainties of life. Do we recognize one in Him? We need a physician for our moral wounds: we need a source of strength in our many temptations: we need a rule and a standard of holiness: we need, all of us, an arm, a strong arm, to lean on when we shall pass, not long hence, through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. All this He is: all this He can give us, and much more. But have we any practical knowledge of Him which enables us to claim these blessings at His hand? When He has fixed His eye upon us at some turning point in life,—when He has reached out His pastoral crook and beckoned us to follow Him up the narrow way,—have we obeyed? No doubt faithfulness, submission, courage, perseverance were necessary; but did He not merit them? Has He done so much for us? shall we do nothing—*nothing* for Him? Or, if this has been as He would wish, are we associating ourselves in any sense with His work in the world? As we all may join in the intercessions of Him our great high priest, so we all may work under His mantle—the mantle of the Good Shepherd. How many a work of mercy in the church has that gracious, that tender figure inspired which else had been denied to suffering human beings! By our individual exertions,—by strengthening the hands and hearts of the ministers of Christ,—by doing our best to raise their idea and standard of work and life,—by entering with sympathy and humility into cases of misery and ignorance which but for His mercy might well have been our own, we may all of us, laymen as well as clergy, women as well as men, simple and unlearned as well as lettered, have a part in promoting that great work of restoration and care for fallen men which is the glory of our Divine Master Jesus, as the Good Shepherd of humanity, and which is our own only ground of hope in time and for eternity.

100-11-2





University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388
Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

OL OCT 03 2000

REC'D C.L. SEP 19 '00

REC'D C.L. SEP 19 '00

